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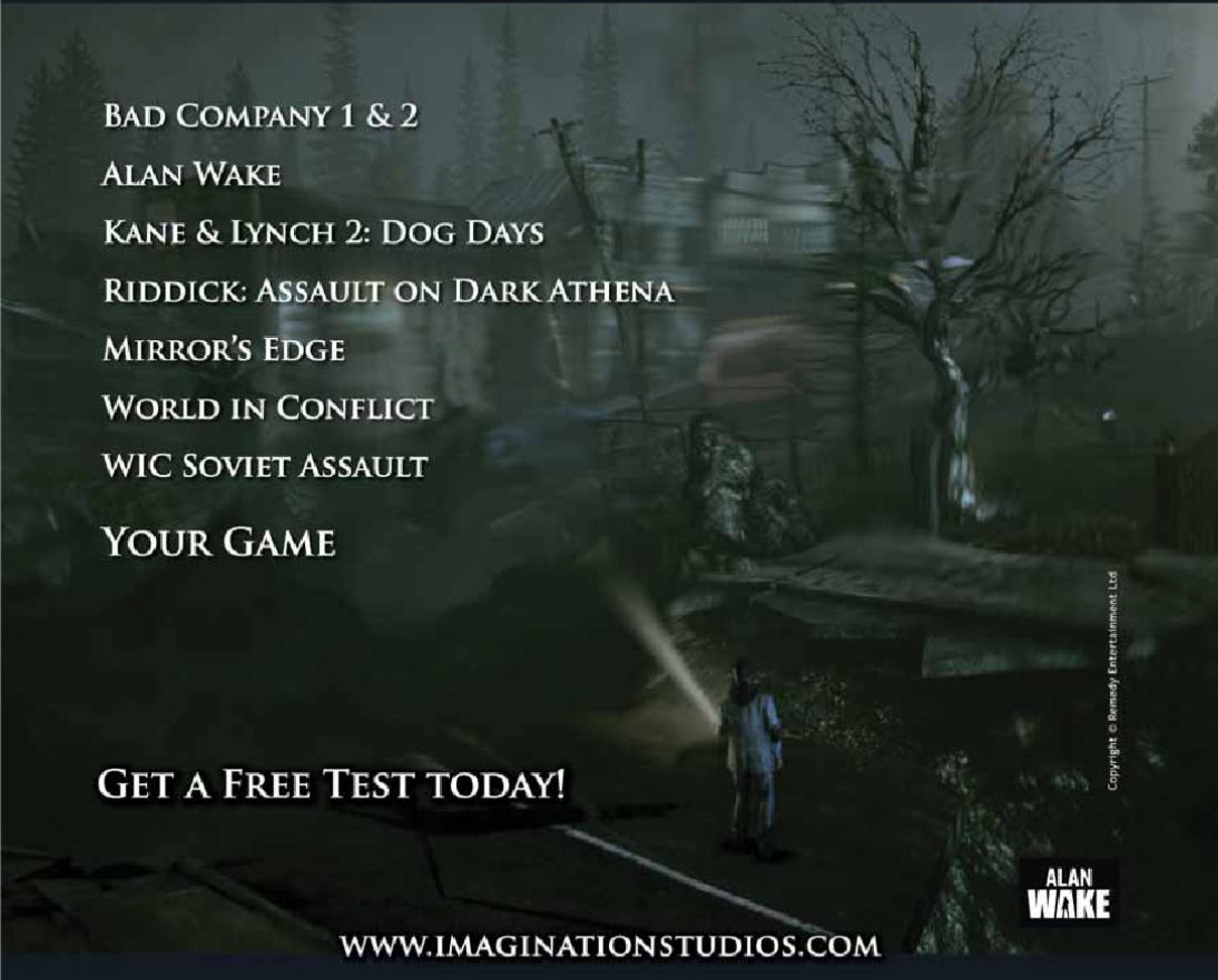

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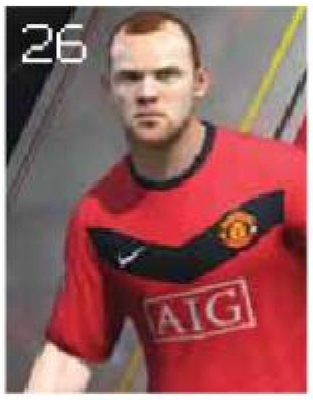

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Editor-in-Chief
Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Deputy Editor
Will Freeman
will.freeman@intentmedia.co.uk

Staff Writer
Stuart Richardson
will.freeman@intentmedia.co.uk

Designer
Dan Bennett
dan.bennett@intentmedia.co.uk

Advertising Manager
Katie Rawlings
katie.rawlings@intentmedia.co.uk

Advertising Executive
Alex Boucher
alex.boucher@intentmedia.co.uk

Production Manager
Suzanne Powles
suzanne.powles@intentmedia.co.uk

Sub-Editor
Gemma Messina
gemma.messina@intentmediaco.uk

Publisher
Stuart Dinsey
stuart.dinsey@intentmedia.co.uk

Managing Editor
Lisa Foster
lisa.foster@intentmedia.co.uk

Contributors
John Broomhall, Nick Gibson, Kevin Hassall, Mark Rein, Sophie Houlden, Billy Thomson, Gordon Bell, Thomas Grové, Mark Rein, David Braben

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0 - 1
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ALPHA

ADVENTURES IN GAMES DEVELOPMENT: NEWS, VIEWS & MORE

"Newsflash: a lot of people don't care about games. Weirdos..."
Ben Board, Microsoft, p15

Activision loves Europe
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The Awards: excitement builds
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'We need to release games year-round'
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WELCOME TO
E3 EXPO!

Indian dev giant targets UK

Gameshastra sets up London outfit as it continues to grow reputation ● Expansion cements studio reputation

by Michael French

ONE OF INDIA'S largest games companies is expanding to the UK. Gameshastra, best known as a QA service provider and developer, has opened a new facility in London, and hired former Player One boss Martin Ogden to run it.

The move comes as Gameshastra has made the transition from services firm to fully-fledged studio. In recent years it has boasted strong ties with Sony, which has looked to add region-relevent to its formats in India. As part of the partnership Gameshastra has made games PS3, PSP and PS3 games for the Indian market – it was also one of the first to be introduced to the PSP Minis digital download scheme.

But now the developer has its sights set on wider expansion. With the UK office it plans to establish a new consumer brand for original digitally distributed games. The firm also plans to ramp up its localisation and QA outsourcing offer.

"We're moving up a gear now," said Prakash Ahuja, CEO, Gameshastra. It is hoped Ogden can push Gameshastra forward in Europe. Previously, he worked on publishing of over 100 mobile games, including *Michael Vaughan Cricket*, *Ronnie O'Sullivan Snooker*, *Young Bond*, *RBS 6 Nations Rugby*, and a Manchester United game. He previously worked for the likes of Paramount and Universal Home Entertainment.

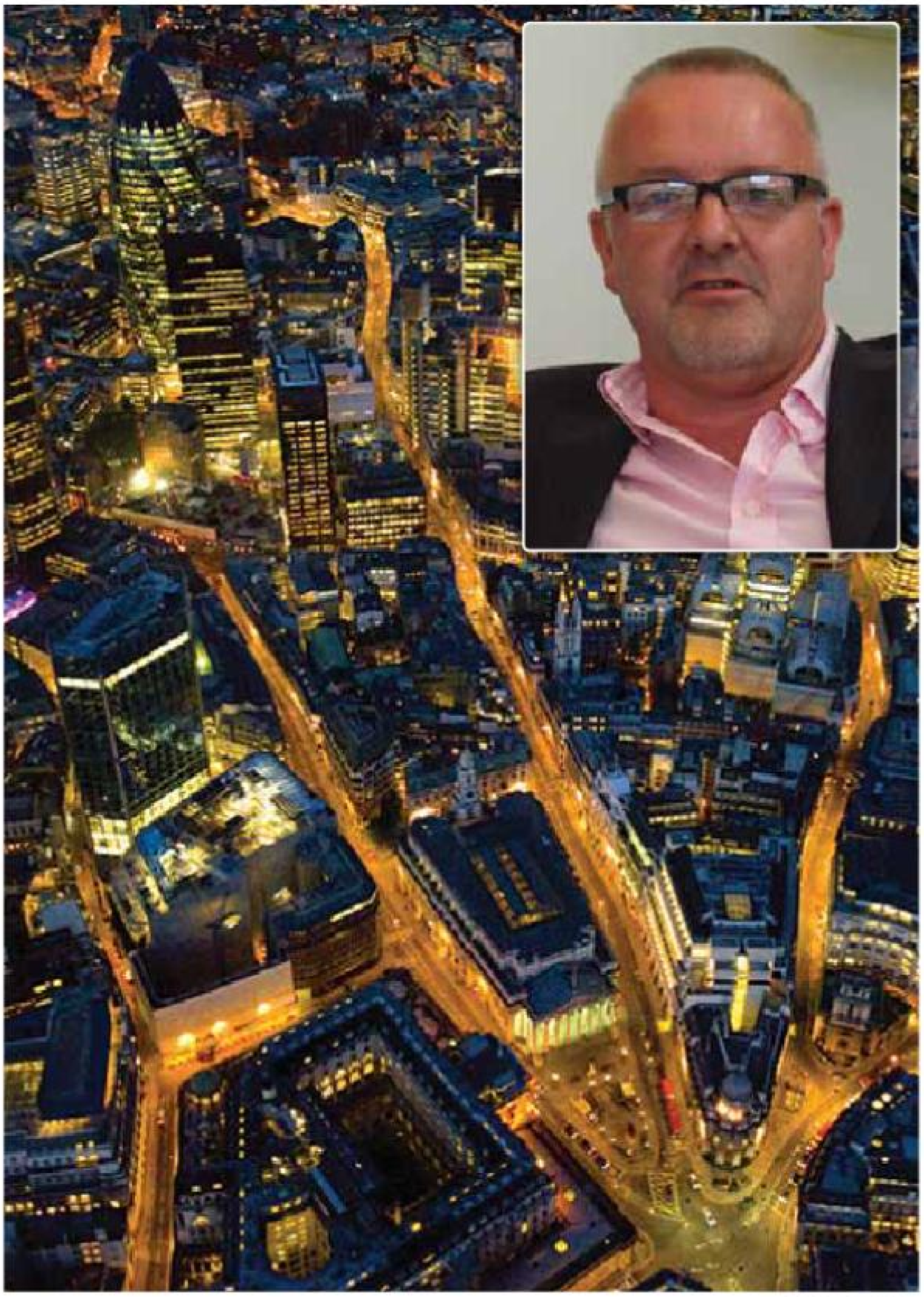
"We're expanding quickly, and are being joined by the very best individuals in the business," added Ahuja. "Martin will maintain our successful working relationship with Sony Computer Entertainment and help us deliver outstanding digital gaming products not only to Sony consumers but also to other leading players in the European market.

"With his balance of creative flair and commercial leadership he has shaped and grown the companies he has worked for and with."

Ogden added: "It's an exciting time for the games industry and Gameshastra intends to be an increasingly major player within it."

www.gameshastra.com

> ***"Gameshastra intends to be a major player within the games industry."***
>
> Martin Ogden, Gameshastra



Editorial

Tax evasion

DEVELOP SET TONGUES wagging online last month with a story that shattered the idea our industry is united in the fight for tax breaks.

Turns out, surprise surprise, you can't please everyone. And some larger games firms have expressed enough caution to prove correct the Government's classic claim the industry is not unanimous on its call for games relief.

(The Government's call for industry unity all through the lobbying process was itself pretty petty and divisive – but that's politics for you, and a rant for another time.)

So who was this company against tax breaks? I think for now that too is probably a story for another time (keep your eyes on *Develop Online* in the meantime) – and as exciting as it might be to know all the gossip, it isn't the real story here.

Here is what is important: if a company had a reason for objecting to one or more of the commercial aspects a potential games tax break would create, that's fair enough. Businesses have to protect themselves.

But the pros and cons of a tax break have never been properly debated. Instead everyone from the extremes represented from Tiga to ELSPA, with media like *Develop* in between, wrongly assumed that the majority dictated the agenda.

We all forgot that just because 80 per cent of people in the industry said a tax break was a good thing, it doesn't mean *everyone* thinks it's a good thing.

So the real crime isn't objecting to tax breaks, it's that the industry hasn't even debated what they would really mean for us. And at a time when clear, frank discussions are needed to prove that the industry is mature, the people that could have led the debate instead took the locked-under-confidentiality agenda too far and stifled a debate before it had even begun.

Michael French

michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Michael

Oui J'tiame!

Publishing kingpin joins the campaign for UK games dev breaks ●

Dave Stohl, SVP of world-wide studios at Activison

by Rob Crossley

GLOBAL GIANT Activision is embarking on a Euro-wide charm offensive.

The sometimes controversial California-headquartered group has become a hallmark of American games publishing, but has now elected to dive deep into the collective conscience of the European and UK dev scene.

Last month Activision announced it had joined UK trade association Tiga – a move which dovetailed the publisher's widely-applauded push for UK game development tax breaks.

And speaking with *Develop*, the company also revealed it wants to eventually migrate its new indie talent competition to Europe.

The varying reputations of Bobby Kotick's company have each been built through one unified fact – the group has exhibited an astounding biz-dev acumen.

And now Activision wants to help protect its studios by joining the call for tax break measures.

The group has two studio investments in Britain, with the Liverpool-based Bizarre Creations (*Blur*) as well as Leamington Spa-based FreeStyleGames (*DJ Hero 2*).

Activision chief public policy officer George Rose said the firm joined Tiga partly as a testament to its support to the British games tax break campaign – which itself has this year been on the cusp of triumph only to fall apart at the eleventh hour.

"The UK has one of the most talented and creative workforces anywhere in the industry," said Rose.

"The introduction of games tax relief in the UK will be a game changer. It will make the UK a significantly more attractive place to invest in games development. Games tax relief will lead to increased investment, more job creation and power economic growth.

"If games tax relief is not introduced then the UK will remain at a real disadvantage in comparison to other territories as a location for inward investment. Without games tax relief the UK games industry will not fulfil its potential."

But Activision's flirt with Europe goes beyond tax breaks.

Speaking to *Develop* the firm explained that its Independent Games Contest – which currently only accepts US entrants – could eventually find its way to Europe.

"Initially, there were so many legal hurdles for us," a company spokesperson said, "and we totally have looked into expanding into Europe, to be honest with you, but there were just so many legal hurdles. You can't just give away money apparently.

"It took us so long just to get the rules set up for the US, that we really just didn't have time to expand it across Europe."

The clarification comes as part of *Develop*'s interview with Dave Stohl; a decorated development veteran who began his career with Activision back in the mid-Nineties and progressed to his role at head of studios.

Stohl discusses more details of the contest, as well as Activision's relationship with its studios, in an exclusive interview with *Develop Online*. To read the in-depth interview which covers key issues such as Infinity Ward, Sledgehammer Games and the future of Activision's studios, visit www.develop-online.net.

As part of the interview, an Activision rep has also hit back at criticisms alleging its

Activision hot for EU

Next, publishing giant is hoping to offer big indie games payout to ambitious new European games developers

ACTIVISION®

$500,000 indie talent contest will force participants relinquish their IP to the publishing giant.

In a surprise move during February's DICE Summit, Activision CEO Bobby Kotick unveiled the indie game competition and said his company wants to capture some of the dazzling raw talent that orbits the industry.

Yet from the moment Activision opened the first phase of the contest, a number of developers have alleged that finalists would have to give up their IP to Activision to proceed in the contest.

It was rumour that cast familiar aspersions on a publisher looking to revamp its public image. But Activision says that the speculation is unequivocally false.

"There was some confusion to the way the rules were written," a spokesperson told *Develop*.

"It was thought that if you enter the contest you automatically give up your IP rights to Activision. That's not true at all.

"What the wording in our rules meant was that if you enter the contest with your own game idea you have to prove that your idea belongs to you. That's all it meant."

Activision didn't completely rule out the possibility of acquiring IP from finalists of the contest – but insisted that such a business move would only be possible after the competition hands out $175,000 to the winner and $75,000 to the runner up.

"If you win the contest, and we want to publisher your game, we then enter into a completely separate discussion about who owns the IP. But by default the game designer keeps it," the spokesperson added.

With the confusion cleared up, Activision has told *Develop* that the contest will award $500,000 to winning developers before expanding to Europe soon.

US-based independent developers can today submit their game proposal to Activision and, by October, the publisher will have picked five finalists, awarding the winning submission $175,000 to assist in the development of the game.

> ***"If games tax relief is not introduced then the UK will remain at a real disadvantage in comparison to other territories as a location for inward investment."***
>
> George Rose, Activision

The runner-up will receive $75,000 for the same purposes, but it is likely that both winners – and possibly those who just missed the mark – will network with Activision on publishing partnership opportunities.

"We're also running the competition again from October to March," said the spokesperson, "where another batch of first prize and second prize winners will be announced from five finalists."

The small window of time between the two phases will give Activision the opportunity to tweak the contest to make it better for the contestants.

Stohl himself said of the contest: "We're figuring it out right now, and there's obviously a lot of passion for the scheme.

"This is a work in progress and we're still trying to figure out how we do it. This is why we have two phases with revisions along the way.

"As big as everything has become in this industry, I think it's a really cool thing for us to do. For a guy like me who's been around forever, I've seen the industry change so much, and the barriers to entry have got higher for people wanting to work at studios.

Aside from handing out cash to the two first-place winners and two runners-up, Stohl hoped Activision would be tempted to strike a number of publishing deals with many more finalists.

He said that the idea for the contest had been floating around Activision for a long time, adding that "[Activision CEO] Bobby [Kotick] had a lot of passion for the idea."

He also suggested, though couldn't outright confirm, that the indie contest will tie in with Activision's digital strategy.

Added Stohl: "Given the size of the games in development, I imagine this contest will mix in with our digital strategy, but nothing's been finalised. There is a lot of opportunity now for digital content, so I would say digital channels is the most likely outcome for the winner.

"And there absolutely there is a chance we could expand the contest beyond the US. First things first though; I want to make sure it works in the US. We want to make it work, and I'm taking this thing in baby steps."

www.activision.com

Industry heavyweights sponsor Develop Awards

Pivotal ceremony now just days away – a diverse cross-section of industry ties with key peer-voted pan-European event

by Will Freeman

Some of the industry's biggest names have thrown their weight behind the forthcoming Develop Awards.

Signed up as Gold Partners are games industry recruitment specialist Amiqus and art outsourcing and mocap experts Imagination Studios.

"Imagination Studios is honoured to be amongst the finalists in Visual Outsourcing at the 2010 Develop Awards," confirmed the firm's business development manager Daniel Klemesrud.

"This prestigious event has become a true showcase of the talent that is in the gaming industry today."

"The Develop Awards event is a great chance for us to see many of our clients receive the accolades they deserve," added Amiqus business manager Liz Prince.

"We believe that our business supplies the building blocks for developers, providing them with the best and the brightest talent to ensure their success and growth."

Also supporting the highly regarded show are Event Partners RealtimeUK, which serves as one of the most prolific CG production studios, and IGN's leading digital download platform Direct2Drive.

"The awards night always showcases the very best in creative and innovative ideas – all of which are crucial in moving the games industry forward," stated RealtimeUK's MD Tony Prosser. "It's great to see there are companies from all over Europe nominated for awards, and it looks set to be the most competitive awards ceremony yet."

"We are delighted to be a sponsor and to have the opportunity to work with, and support this year's nominees and winners," said IGN UK MD Ian Chambers.

Elsewhere technology giant Autodesk is hosting the show's drinks reception, while outsourced service provider Babel is sponsoring the prestigious Development Legend Award.

The development sector's brightest stars will attend the 2010 Develop Awards

The only peer-voted accolades for the UK and European games industry, the Develop Awards are this year taking place on July 14th at the Hilton Metropole Hotel in Brighton.

To reserve your place at this event email Kathryn.Humphrey@intentmedia.co.uk.

www.develop-online.net

DEVELOP DIARY

YOUR COMPLETE GAMES DEVELOPMENT EVENT CALENDAR FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD…

GDC EUROPE
August 16th to 18th
Cologne, Germany
www.gdceurope.com

The pan-European sister event to the San Francisco GDC brings together developers, business executives and those across the service and technology sectorsimmediately before Gamescom.

Pitched as the essential platform for learning, inspiration and networking for the creators of computer, console, handheld, mobile and online games in Europe, the conference is set to host numerous sessions and panels addressing game design, production, technology, art and business.

Over 130 speakers are currently readying their presentations, including keynotes from Bigpoint and Tencent Games.

JULY 2010

ANIMATION 10 - AWARDS NIGHT
July 9th
Manchester, UK
www.cs.manchester.ac.uk

GAME HERO 2010
July 10th
Gateshead, UK
www.gatesheaddigitalsummer.com

DEVELOP CONFERENCE
July 13th to 15th
Brighton, UK
www.develop-conference.com

DEVELOP AWARDS
July 14th
Brighton, UK
www.develop-online.net

CASUAL CONNECT SEATTLE
July 20th to 22nd
Seattle, US
seattle.casualconnect.org

SIGGRAPH 2010
July 25th to 29th
Los Angeles, US
www.siggraph.org/

AUGUST 2010

DARE PROTOPLAY
August 13th to 15th
Edinburgh, Scotland
www.daretobedigital.com

GDC EUROPE
August 16th to 18th
Cologne, Germany
www.gdceurope.com

GAMESCOM 2010
August 18th to 22nd
Cologne, Germany
www.gamescom-cologne.com

EDINBURGH INTERACTIVE
August 25th to 26th
Edinburgh, Scotland
www.edinburghinteractivefestival.com

CEDEC 2010
August 31st to September 2nd
Yokohama, Japan
http://cedec.cesa.or.jp/2010/en/

SEPTEMBER 2010

TOKYO GAME SHOW
September 16th to 19th
Tokyo, Japan
http://tgs.cesa.or.jp/english

MCV PUB QUIZ
September 23rd
London, UK
www.mcvuk.com

DEVELOP PUB QUIZ
September 29th
London, UK
www.develop-online.net

OCTOBER 2010

LONDON GAMES FESTIVAL
October 1st to November 4th
London, UK
www.londongamesfestival.co.uk

CASUAL CONNECT KYIV
October 20th to 22nd
Kyiv, Ukraine
kyiv.casualconnect.org

Image courtesy of

CODEMASTERS

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"The *morpheme* engine and tools enable fast and compelling content creation, driving the animation quality in *bodycount* to new heights of realism."

Bryan Marshall, CTO at Codemasters

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morpheme
advanced animation system

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www.naturalmotion.com

WorldView

Our digest of the past month's global games news…

DEALS

Konami has licensed **Epic Games'** Unreal Engine 3 for upcoming horror title *Saw 2*.

Zynga is taking a $147m investment from Japanese firm **Softbank**.

UK indie **Spilt Milk** is developing DLC for **Ruffian Games'** *Crackdown 2*.

Middleware firm **Gamr7** has penned a deal with **Allegorithmic** for integration of Ürban Pad with the Substance Air.

Scoreloop has signed a deal with **Ideaworks Labs** for distribution of the latter's Airplay SDK.

Californian indie **Obsidian** is partnering with **Gas Powered Games** to build new dungeon crawling RPG *Dungeon Siege 3*.

Telltale Games has snapped up the *Jurassic Park* licence from **NBC Universal**.

EA has become the first publisher to sign up to **Gaikai's** video games streaming service.

Koch Media has signed French outfit **Hydravision** to make an X Factor game.

Emergent has licenced Gamebryo Lightspeed to **Bloober Team** for WiiWare horror title *Last Flight*.

GAIKAI TARGETS FULL SERVICE BY 2011

Cloud gaming service Gaikai is getting closer to phase-one launch – and the company behind the revolutionary tech is aiming to expand the business fast.

Gaikai co-founder Andrew Gault expressed his optimism in focusing the business on rapidly-streamed in-browser game demos.

But when asked for a timeline of when the company will begin a full game streaming service similar to OnLive, he said: "We'd like to do it tomorrow but it's all about picking you battles. I think we'd like to start it in a year or so, all the company's founders would like to target that."

Gault clarified that a demo service makes most sense for now, adding: "[but] of course we want to move to the next stage."

Gaikai offers near-immediate access to demos from the click of a banner advert displayed on various websites.

www.gaikai.com

ICELAND/UK

CCP NEWCASTLE OFFICIALLY OPENS

EVE Online studio CCP has officially unveiled its fourth games studio - this time in the UK.

Word of CCP Newcastle leaked earlier this year. Located in Gateshead Quays, the studio will focus on console game development and "charting new paths for gameplay and business models that will breathe new life into connected consoles" the firm said.

"The decision to establish a UK studio was an easy one for CCP," said Richard Smith, technical director of CCP Newcastle.

"The North East has a distinguished heritage of game development. We have been able to assemble a world-class team of console developers with unparalleled Unreal Engine expertise and integrate them with CCP's global organisation."

www.ccpgames.com

USA

BURGER KING ANNOUNCE KINECT DEAL

Burger King has made a deal with Microsoft to support the launch of the upcoming Kinect controller, released in the US on November 4.

The announcement comes in the wake of the highly successful 2006 run of Xbox 360 titles that were made available with Burger King meals in the US. Those titles were developed by UK studio Blitz Games.

No word has yet been given as to any Blitz involvement this time around, or even as to the availability of any products the deal may see produced.

"By making you the controller, Kinect for Xbox 360 is uniquely magical and instantly fun. We're excited to partner with the Burger King brand to bring that magic to everyone this holiday season," said Burger King North America chief marketing officer Mike Kappitt.

www.burgerking.com

UK/JAPAN

REBELLION DEVELOPING NEW KONAMI TITLE

Konami has revealed a new action title in development at its E3 press conference. Called *NeverDead*, the title is currently being developed by Oxford-based studio Rebellion.

Konami's Shinta Nojiri is designing the new game, which bases its gameplay mechanics around the idea that the central playable characters are immortal.

NeverDead is set for release on Xbox 360 and PS3, but no release date has yet been given by either studio.

www.rebellion.co.uk

UK

GAMESAID POKER TOURNAMENT SET

GamesAid, a UK games industry charity for young people, is preparing its third annual charity poker tournament to be held at the Develop Conference in Brighton.

Sponsored by both Relentless Software and Eurogamer, the event will take place from 8pm on the evening of Tuesday 13th July at the Grosvenor Casino located on the Brighton Seafront.

The first place prize is £400, second place £200, and third place £100, with many other prizes available on the night.

Players are requested to register their £50 entry prior to the event on the link below where all the tournament details, including venue, timing and game rules.

"Relentless is a strong supporter of GamesAid and is happy to provide the opportunity for a great poker event and raise loads of money for charity," said Relentless co-founder Andrew Eades.

"There's a beginners' table this year so please come along even if you are a novice."

www.justgiving.com/gamesaidpokerdevelop2010

USA

EA LAUNCHES GUN CLUB LOYALTY SCHEME

EA used its E3 press conference to unveil a customer loyalty scheme named Gun Club, designed to connect player experiences of shooters like *Medal of Honor* and *Battlefield: Bad Company*.

The intention is to bring EA's army of developers closer to the end user.

Gun Club members gain access to special in-game content, early access to beta tests and demos and a range of news offerings.

www.gunclub.ea.com

FOR THE LATEST NEWS…

HEAD TO WWW.DEVELOP-ONLINE.NET

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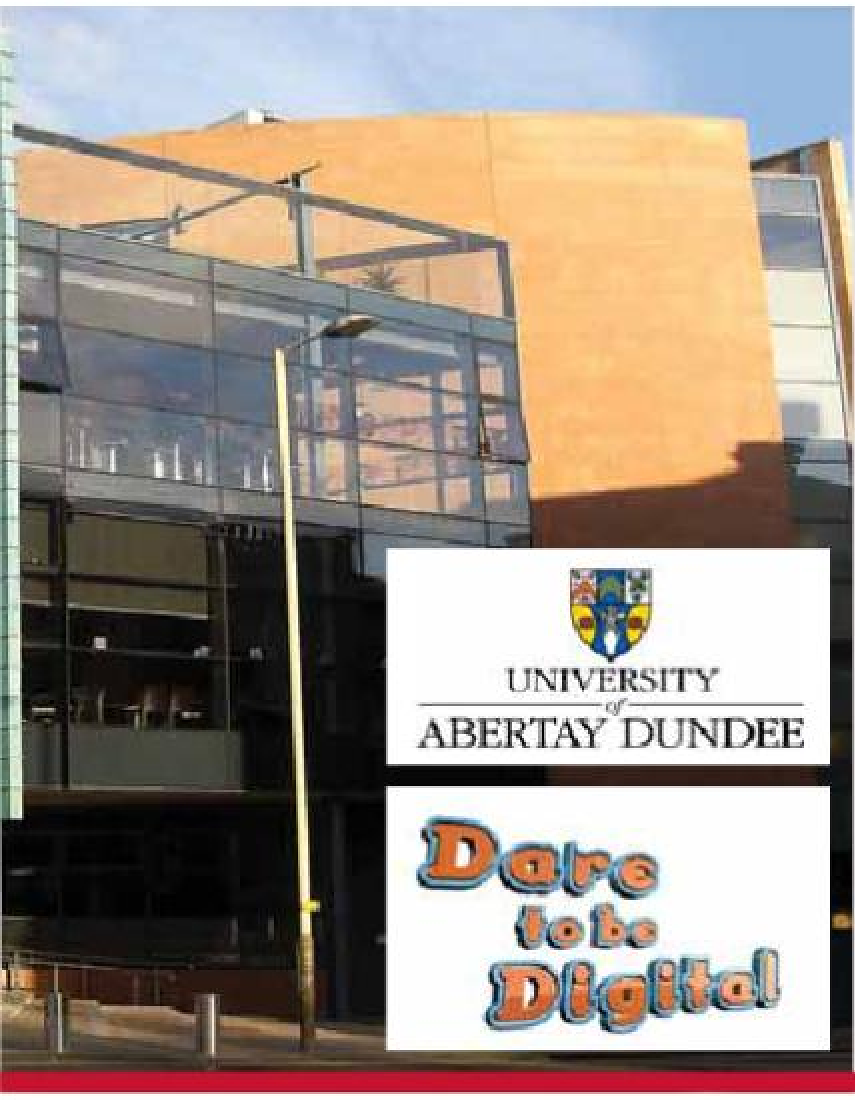


DARE TO BE DIGITAL KICKS OFF

Fifteen finalist teams in this year's annual Dare to be Digital contest have begun their quest to win a BAFTA trophy.

The 2010 finalists represent 15 competing universities spread across the UK and Ireland, but also stretching to schools in India, Sweden, China and the US.

The competition sees teams of arts and science students create working game prototypes under the watchful eye of industry design veterans and publisher execs.

Last year's competition awarded three finalists £2,500 in hand at Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The competition officially kicked off this week, with entrants situated at the University of Abertay in Dundee.

Elaine Russell, Dare to be Digital project manager, said Abertay is "a world leader in computer games design education".

"Abertay's unique approach is to emulate as realistically as possible the real-world, hot-house environment of commercial games development, and to involve industry in the design and delivery of courses," she added.

www.daretobedigital.com

ELSPA/ISFE EUROPEAN GAMER STUDY RESULTS

76%

…of European gamers play less than five hours a week

33%

…of UK gamers use a PC as their main 'console'

32%

…of the UK's population now classify themselves as a gamer

55%

…of gamers playing 'mini-games' online, either using browser plug-ins or those made with Flash or Shockwave

25%

…of Europeans aged 16 to 49 that consider themselves gamers

20%

…of women in Europe play video games - in the UK it rises to 31 per cent

E3 SAY WHAT?!

"Nintendo's back. Nintendo had an affair with everybody's mum, and now they've come back to the marriage."

*Epic Games' **Cliff Bleszinski** puts his pleasure about Nintendo's triumphant E3 in no uncertain terms.*

"I'd really like to thank everyone at Sony for their gracious hospitality and for not punching me in the face."

*Valve MD **Gabe Newell** gets all humble after a vocal U-turn on PS3 support.*

"Gaming is staying up 'til 3am to earn a trophy that isn't real. But is. It is girls who know the way to a man's heart is through a melee attack."

*Sony's advert creation '**Kevin Butler**, VP of Everything' does at least speak the truth.*

"Our show really isn't a lot about razzle-dazzle. We are in many ways more Sundance than the Academy Awards."

*Hmm. We didn't see Robert Redford anywhere though, EA CEO **John Riccitiello.***

COMMENT: BUSINESS

Is mobile gaming's future social?

by Nick Gibson, Games Investor Consulting

Japan's mobile games market has undergone a significant metamorphosis in the last few years, lead by companies such as DeNA and Gree .

Those companies have pioneered the concept of mobile social network gaming (MSNG); a fusion of Facebook games' community functionality and viral gameplay and distribution mechanisms with mobile's portability and ubiquity. Gaming on these services comprises avatar customisation and mini-games infused with the sort of social virality found in games like *FarmVille*.

MOBILISING JAPAN

Also like *FarmVille*, their revenue model is microtransaction-based and the market leaders are each generating hundreds of millions of dollars in high margin revenue per annum, but from relatively small userbases – well under 20 million. So why has such an attractive business model not been replicated in our mobile games market where all good ideas are pilfered widely and with impunity?

The simple answer is that it is being replicated within the youthful smartphone gaming market but is being held back by a number of factors.

The first is, perhaps surprisingly, Apple. To all intents and purposes (i.e. revenues) smartphone gaming really equals iPhone gaming at the moment. Unfortunately, Apple's prohibition of premium virtual currencies – a crucial component of the microtransaction business model – has prevented the development of the sort of MSNG revenue model employed so effectively in Japan. It is a baffling strategic move by Apple that only makes sense if the firm is planning to introduce its own mandatory premium virtual currency system.

Given that Apple is to launch a basic MSNG service (Game Center) later this year, this is, in my view, a distinct longer-term possibility. This has not stopped the larger iPhone publishers such as Gameloft and ngmoco launching their own closed-platform MSNG services, which will complement Game Center, whilst a raft of open-platform MSNG services from independents led by OpenFeint and Scoreloop have brought the concept to the indie developer masses. Geo-location based leaderboards, Facebook integration, friends lists, challenges, notifications, avatars and achievements are the staple of these services, but true microtransaction support remains conspicuous for its absence in most of their feature-lists.

Western developers must therefore turn to other platforms for the potential to implement a fully-featured MSNG service, and therein lies the second barrier: although shipments of non-iPhone handsets dwarf that of iPhone, users of these platforms are not spending anything like as much money on games as iPhone users. Large installed bases are useless without an OS/app store ecosystem and user experience that is conducive to gaming.

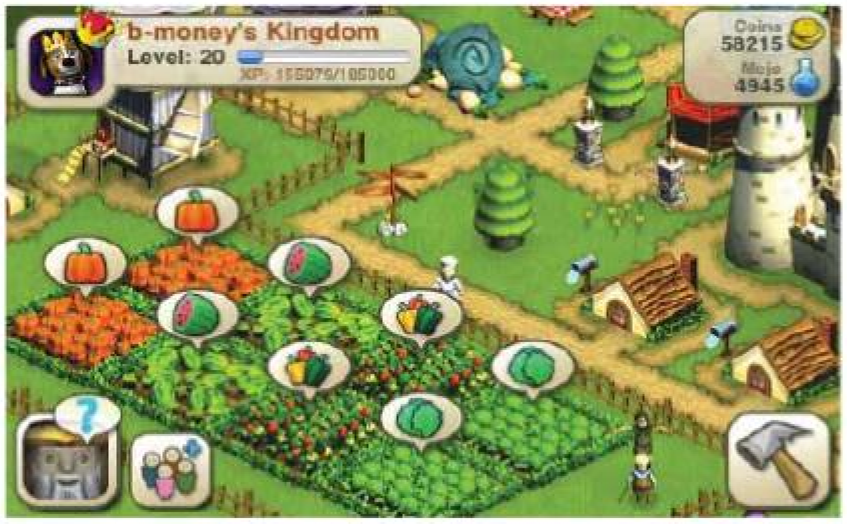
Game discovery, recommendations, download and installation and, most importantly, payment are all problem areas of varying severity for other platforms. Android (v.2 and later) arguably gets closest to emulating Apple's impressive precedent but it still has a way to go with making payment ubiquitous and low friction.

> ***"The first major entrant into the Android MSNG market, Scoreloop, is already attracting 300,000 new registered players per week."***

Despite this, we fully expect smartphone gaming's future to be multi-platform and believe that the gradual improvements to the user experience being implemented by the other platform owners will attract both developers and paying users. Gaming is already starting to feature more strongly in other platforms' app stores from Android, Symbian/Ovi and Windows Mobile to Palm and even Blackberry, and non-iPhone games revenues are growing rapidly.

THE KEYS, THE SECRET

We see these alternative platforms as playing a key role in the development of a Western MSNG market. The first major entrant into the Android MSNG market, Scoreloop, is already attracting 300,000 new registered players per week. Support for Android and other platforms will grow, and we expect MSNG services to attempt to grow their social networks aggressively to reach the sort of scale which creates a barrier to exit for users.



ngmoco's We Rule stands as one of the first fully featured MSNG games released in the West

There is also a good chance that this will, itself, create another hindrance to the MSNG market's growth: fragmentation. Without a single dominant network – as Facebook has provided for web-based social network gaming – a sea of incompatible MSNG silos will simply frustrate players having to replicate friends lists multiple times for multiple games.

The final barrier to the MSNG market taking off in the West is developer resistance to the implementation of freemium and microtransaction models. We believe that this inertia is widespread amongst smartphone developers already wedded to the 'traditional' retail model despite its manifold shortcomings, the unequivocal success of microtransactions in other games markets and the early success of the first fully featured MSNG games such as ngmoco's *We Rule*.

We Rule used a light-weight variant of microtransactions and still topped the paid charts, represented half of all ngmoco's daily usage and created havoc for ngmoco's servers due to its popularity.

On Facebook, few games are launched which don't incorporate social features; the commercial dynamics are just too compelling. For similar reasons, we believe that the current trickle of Western MSNG titles will rise with increasing speed over the next couple of years as MSNG services' social features become must-have for all major new releases to tap into their growing user bases and also to take full advantage of the microtransaction model.

Nick Gibson is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing research, strategy consulting and corporate finance services to the games, media and finance industries.
www.gamesinvestor.com

COMMENT: DESIGN

10 Weeks to Shine

by Billy Thomson, Ruffian Games

Over the years I've been asked one question more than any other: 'What do I need to do to get a job in a game development studio?'

For years it was a really difficult question for me to answer. Thankfully that's not really the case anymore. Ruffian Games is based in Dundee, Scotland and we're really lucky to have the University of Abertay which runs a dedicated games development course that teaches its students everything they need to be ready for an entry level position in a games development studio. While that's a huge benefit in itself, Abertay also runs an annual game design competition targeted at university students. The competition is known as Dare to be Digital and it began back in 1999.

Above: Dare to be Digital entrants have the chance to win a special BAFTA prize

FIVE OR SIX OF THE BEST

The contest requires university undergraduates – or recent graduates – to form teams of five-to-six people. These teams must then design their game, create a production schedule and create a game pitch and present it to a panel of judges made up of experienced game developers from some of the best games studios in the UK.

If their pitch is successful – only 15 teams will be selected to take part in this year's competition – they must then work together in a microcosm of a games development studio as they do their best to hit their incredibly tight 10-week deadline. The three key main criteria that Abertay asks its teams to meet are; be creative, have market potential, be technology smart. Nice and simple.

The main objective of this competition is to give the students a very real taste of the various processes, difficult decisions, mixed emotions and hard work that is required to take a game from initial concept through to a playable title that the public can experience and hopefully enjoy. While this is the main objective the more interesting side to this competition for me is the mentoring aspect.

Abertay asks several UK games development studios to provide mentors that can provide some guidance for the teams in each of the main disciplines of game development; production, design, code, art, audio, etcetera. This system allows a strong link to form between the students and the mentors and it's this link that I believe is the key to the success of the competition. Not only does the mentoring process help the students make the right decisions at the right times during their development time; it also allows the mentors to see which students are the driving forces of the teams – the ones who are standing head and shoulders above the rest. This provides a fantastic opportunity for the more talented individuals to show off their abilities directly to the mentors over the 10-week period, and many of them have gone on to secure full time contracts at some of the best studios across the UK including Rockstar North, Rare and Realtime Worlds. We've also got a few working with us at Ruffian Games right now.

> ***"Dare's mentoring system allows a strong link to form between the students and the mentors – this link is the key to the success of the competition."***

NO CONTEST

The best of the teams also get a chance to have their 15 minutes of fame before they even start in the industry with the BAFTA 'Ones to Watch' award. This award is exclusively focused on the Dare to be Digital competition. The team that best represents each of the three categories mentioned earlier are put forward to the BAFTA judging panel with the winning team receiving their BAFTA up on the stage as they bask in the glory of the applause from the elite of the game development community. For guys so young and inexperienced it must be a really amazing experience.

I was lucky enough to be asked to be a design mentor in 2007 and 2008, and have once again been asked to get involved in this year's competition along with one of our senior coders at Ruffian – Dave Hynd AKA 'Magic'. Over the course of the next 10 weeks we'll do our best to help solve problems, inspire creativity, and provide motivation to keep going when teams fall behind schedule and feel overwhelmed.

We want every student to enjoy their time in the competition but to be perfectly honest our goals are ultimately selfish. We want to discover and hire the brightest new talent coming through the university system right now and Dare to be Digital is one of the best showcases around for that talent.

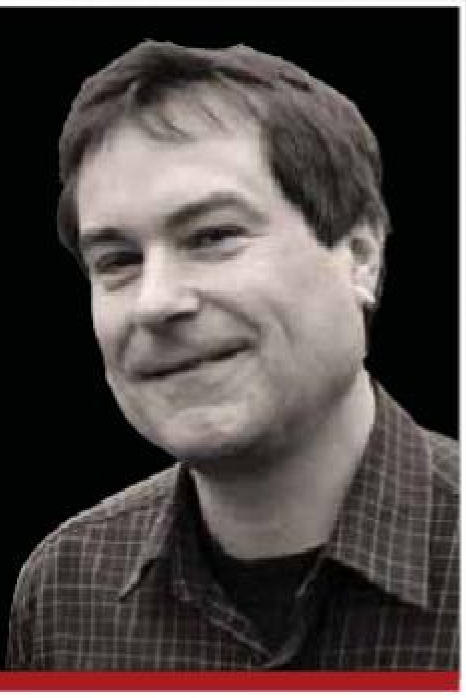
If you want to follow the progress of this year's teams in the competition you can sign up at the official website.
www.daretobedigital.com

Billy Thomson is the creative director of newly-formed developer Ruffian Games. Billy has over 13 years experience of designing video games, including design roles on *Grand Theft Auto* and *GTA2*, before working as lead designer on Realtime Worlds' celebrated *Crackdown*.
www.ruffiangames.com

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS SPONSORED BY DEEP SILVER

COMMENT: INDUSTRY

Has E3 come full circle? Is it a good time to announce a game?



by David Braben

It used to be, looking at the world from a publishing perspective, that the time you launched games was mid October. Christmas was coming, and the game should be comfortably on the shelves prior to Thanksgiving in the US.

That was a couple of decades or so ago. There were far fewer games released, and the 'marketing machine' was little more than getting the games out on the shelves and maybe an ad and a review in one of the weekly or monthly magazines – and most of those were aimed at computing or electronics – not dedicated to games.

It was from that world that what we now know as E3 started, as a part of the Consumer Electronics Show (CES), and it made a lot of sense, breaking away from CES as E3 about ten years later. There was prestige in a big shiny show, and a great deal of money was spent there.

Gradually, Christmas started to become crowded, and advertising before Christmas became correspondingly more expensive, especially on TV. Also, as game development times ballooned to a year or more, the danger of slippage became significant, and January became a common time for games to hit the streets – and often quite an attractive time, as kids had their Christmas money, and advertising was cheaper.

Before long, even January became crowded; retailers still had stock from the Christmas games, so January turned into February, as an attractive time to release games. Following that, Easter started to become a 'good time' to release games and, in parallel with the rise of importance of share price for the big players, calendar quarters became ever more important, and pressure to release games into the difficult Q2 each year has meant that June is now quite a popular time. Currently perhaps May, July and August are the only times when there aren't many games released. I'm sure that will change too.

Over the same period, we've also seen the rise of instant games news, worldwide via the numerous excellent web news sites, and the internet has perhaps become the primary source for gamers, especially 'core' gamers, of news about new games. E3's role as the venue to show games to retailers prior to their Christmas ordering also became diluted by the uber-razamatazz, with publishers preferring to hold private events where they could ensure focus 'away from the madding crowd'. Looking at E3 in this context makes the expo seem like an anachronism in this new world.

E3 has become ground zero as a press gallery

> ***"I will be very pleased to see the games market 'join up' – so that games releases happen throughout the year – yes even May, July and August."***

That's not to say that it's not a great event, and an important one for the industry. Ironically, in a sense things have come full circle; it is now the venue of choice for 'super releases', and especially hardware. Things like new technologies and new platforms and their associated software; Kinect, Move, 3DS – as those are still things that have the sort of lead time that is about right for the Christmas season (CES reborn, if you like). But it then becomes a very noisy time for 'normal' games announcements – it is hard to get heard over the megaphone broadcasts of those 'super releases' – and begs a question about the logic of using it as a place to announce new games, unless they are related to those 'super releases'. Perhaps the main function of E3 now is as a group PR event for the industry as a whole?

I for one will be very pleased to see the games market 'join up' – so that games releases happen throughout the year – yes, even May, July and August. There is something very arbitrary when starting development of a particular game: "Well, you have 12 months or 24 months – which is it to be?"

"Erm, it'll probably take 18."

"Well, start in six months then."

Continuous releases help alleviate this – though there is still the effect that certain kinds of game are best released at Christmas – as would companies reporting monthly, but I doubt that is going to happen any time soon. We now have shows more or less throughout the year, in various places around the world (E3, TGS, DICE, GC etc) which also help a great deal, so perhaps the time is right to have year-round releases.

The school of thought 'It's ready when it's ready', is commendable from the development side, but a nightmare from a marketing and financial perspective. Year-round releases may help make the development process easier to plan. We in development should applaud any changes that make this possible, so let's get releasing in May, July or August. You first, of course.

David Braben is the founder of Cambridge-based Frontier Developments. Best known as the co-creator of *Elite*, Braben has contributed to, designed or overseen a number of other projects including *Frontier: Elite II*, *Dog's Life*, *Thrillville* and *LostWinds*. Frontier is currently developing his next title, *The Outsider*. He is also closely involved with Skillset.
www.frontier.co.uk

COMMENT: OPINION

Who's Your Audience?

by Ben Board, Microsoft

In last month's column I opined on the subject of constraints, and specifically the paradoxical sense in which they can enable creativity.

Art doesn't need to be functional, it doesn't need to fulfil a brief; but as developers we tend to be pretty keen on high Metacritic scores and sales figures, and we ought to consider those requirements in just the same terms and with the same passion we bring to our game content.

If you're making a driving game, say, you understand that your audience expects great car dynamics, top-drawer landscape and vehicle rendering, realistic damage, a variety of race modes, and all that, and you employ the best people you can afford – another constraint – to draw on their expert knowledge of the genre.

These are crucial details. They matter enormously to the people considering which driving game to buy. But how many people is that? What about all the people who have never played a driving game? Could you apply what you know about entertainment to appeal to that far bigger potential market. In short, who are our audience, and what are they looking for?

POP THE QUESTIONS

To answer this question Xbox recently carried out a huge research project, surveying 13,000 people across Europe and North America to gain an understanding of the prevailing attitude to games, both directly and in the context of other entertainment forms all staking claims on our time. Our marketing analysts took the raw data, locked themselves in their bedrooms for a few months and emerged brandishing a document we call our 'market segmentation' a classification of our potential consumers, and how they like to be entertained.

This is no empty marketing exercise, Mr Developer Cynic. This is empirical data designed to inform the big decisions you need to make about your game – the sort of insight and language you can use to pitch your title to publishers, and more importantly, to drive sales.

And today, lucky reader, let me share the broad conclusions with you. Sharpen your pencils a read carefully.

We found three key dimensions as useful to distinguish people:

- **Their video game involvement across console, PC and mobile**
- **The importance of friends and socialising**
- **The time they had for entertainment**

Within these axes we found three broad groups, and we called them Engaged, Involved, and Disengaged. We then broke those down further: the Engaged group into five subgroups, and the Involved and Disengaged into two each, to make nine, which I'll tackle in reverse order.

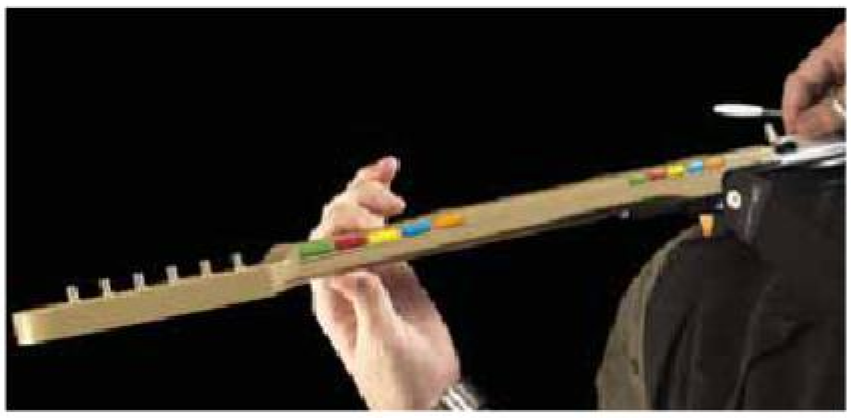
The Disengaged pair, which we call the Dabblers and the Rejecters, are not the droids you're looking for. The former will never graduate from *Minesweeper*, while the spittle-flecked latter bracket video games with WMD. The bad news is that this pair accounted for a third of all respondents.

The Involved pair enjoy interactive entertainment; the question is whether they'll pay your mortgage. Virtually Connected consumers spend their time online with their buddies, their gaming time spent mainly on free online games, typically costing only five bucks a month. PC Lovers love their gaming, but just on the PC, and usually on their own, except for their MMO.

> ***"Art doesn't need to be functional, it doesn't need to fulfil a brief; but as developers we tend to be pretty keen on high Metcritic scores and sales."***

The Engaged segment, we propose, is where the action is. They spend the most money on gaming and the most hours, and time spent aiming your design at one of its five subgroups is time well spent. We dub those groups the Social Core, the Independent Core, Hyper Socials, Hanging Out, and Family Timers.

The Social Core are your true enthusiasts. Highly social and almost all young men, they'll devour complicated, realistic shooters, action-adventures and RPGs, particularly with friends, evangelising the great and pitilessly trashing the rest. They love music, social networking and UGC, and will pay for DLC.



Music and social games are popular with the 'Hanging Out' crowd, says Microsoft audience research.

SHOOT THE CORE

To the Independent Core, gaming is 'me time'. Less likely to play online, but also preferring high-quality, realistic, single-player action games, and also overwhelmingly male, they're less bothered about Facebook or playing with friends. Gaming time is precious to these people, so consider your difficulty settings carefully.

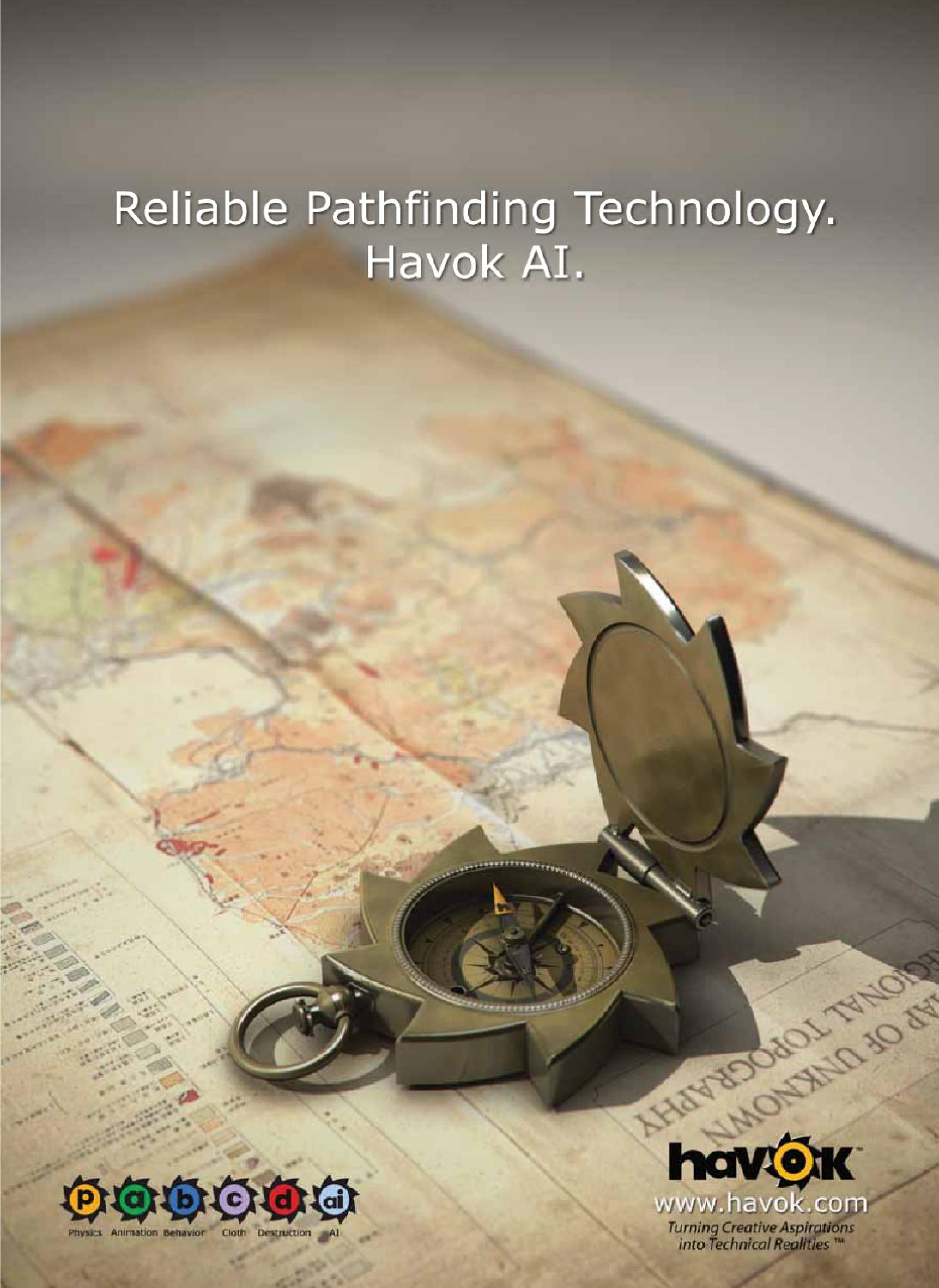
Hyper Socials are usually young women. They value family-friendly entertainment, cooperation rather than competition, physical play over controllers, and their social networks (digital and otherwise) above all. These days, this is a critical segment.

The Hanging Out crowd are similar to the Hyper Socials, albeit more joiners-in than instigators of games sessions, spending less time and money on games. They're not interested in gore, sexual content, competition, or difficult titles, but games are a part of their life, and if you're on guitar they'll grab the drumsticks.

The final segment, the Family Timers, are the least engaged of the Engaged, but video games are just as welcome in the household as their board games. You'll appeal to this lot if your game is uncontroversial, uncompetitive, gender-neutral and easy to learn, and as much fun to watch as to play.

This is just a quick tour. There's a lot more meat on these bones, available through us or your publisher.

Ben Board is European developer account manager at Microsoft, supporting all studios working on games for Xbox and Games For Windows platforms. He previously worked as a programmer and producer at the likes of Bullfrog, EA and Lionhead.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BETA

DEVELOPMENT FEATURES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS & MORE

“Truth be told, I've never been a huge fan of charity work.”
Masaya Matsuura, NanaOn-Sha, p24

Why micro studios mean less is more

p18

A visit to EA Sports’ vast dev facility

p26

The studios defining Brighton

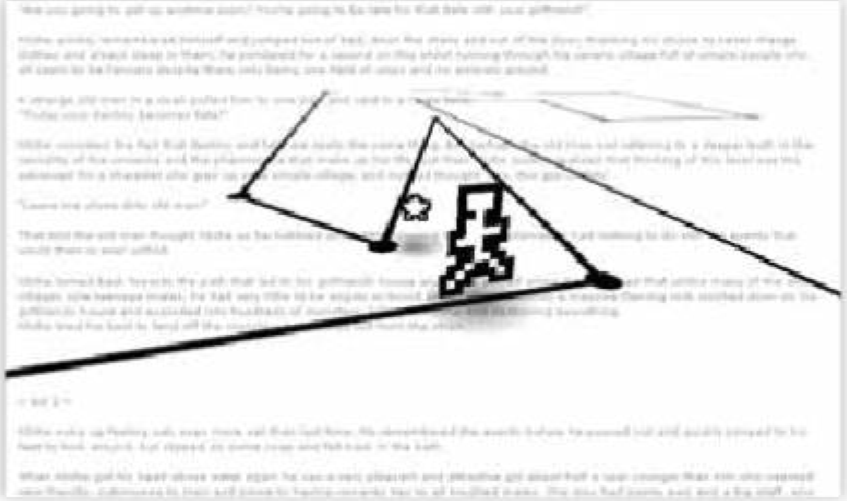
p38

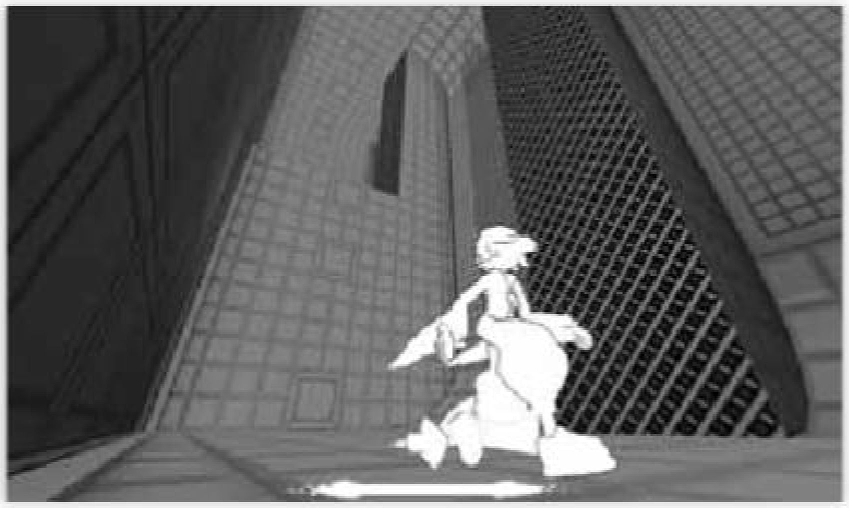
Moving Platform

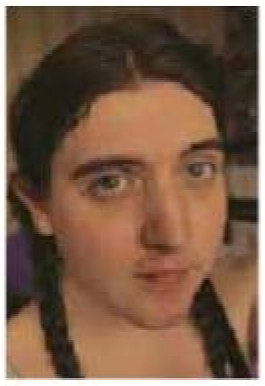
Sony’s worldwide studios president Shuhei Yoshida talks to Develop about changes to the PlayStation philosophy, p21

YOU CAN DO IT

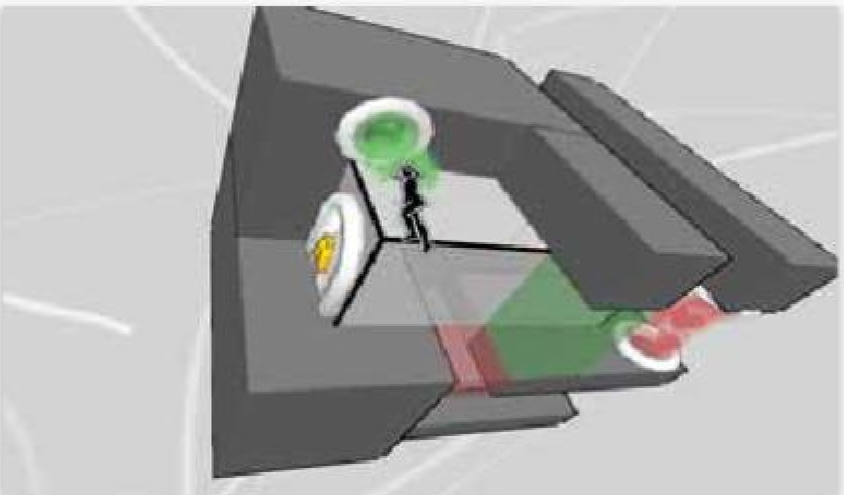
Sophie Houlden hasn't spent a penny on tools to make her indie games – she just rolled up her sleeves and got on with it. Here she explains how it's done…







After some time experimenting and self-funding her indie projects like Box Game, Houlden is now set to launch her first commercial game



Money is hard to find, especially in an economy like this. But you want to become an indie developer, climb from nothing to be at the point where one day, you can afford to do your own shopping.

But it's not easy to get going though, with software costs, and the time it takes to make a game all alone when the big companies spend so many man-hours on even their small projects… wait, actually: for indies it is easy to get started.

There is great free software available for making games these days, and you aren't compromising on quality by going free in most cases either. I'll drop the names of a few pieces of software to check out so you can look them up online.

Most importantly: all of them are free.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Unity is by far my favourite tool right now. It's a game engine/IDE that is super easy to learn and use, can publish to a crapload of platforms – including web – and has a ton of nifty features. Sure, it saves its best features for the 'Pro' version, but you'll be hard pushed to find such a friendly piece of software that can do so much for free elsewhere.

If 2D is more your thing, Game Maker is an excellent choice, it gets a lot of dirty looks from some programmers because of it's 'drag and drop' style scripting, but truthfully it's a great way to learn about the fundamental building blocks of programming, and when you are ready to move on it has its own lesser known 'Game Maker language' which is actually pretty good in my opinion.

With either choice you can make great games though, so who cares what the more snotty programmers think?

If you happen to be one of the more snotty programmers, or just want to be a bit more trendy, check out Flixel by Adam Saltsman (*Canabalt*, *Gravity Hook*) or FlashPunk by Chevy Ray Johnston (*Skullpogo*, *Beacon*). Both are ActionScript libraries you can use to quickly make 2D flash games. If you turn up at a game jam odds are you wont have difficulty finding someone making their game with one of these libraries.

For 3D modeling I highly recommend Blender; yes, the interface is a nightmare, but the new 2.5 version has a brand new front end so if you know other 3D software, migration will be easy, and whilst some people think it doesn't compare to the big expensive alternatives, those people are wrong.

I use Blender for modeling, unwrapping, skinning, animating, sculpting and baking my textures. In a lot of cases I find it's actually easier than my old tool of choice (back when I was a pirate) of 3ds Max.

> ***"It's easy to get started, all you need is the software, but to keep going you need dedication to master your skills and the friendship of the indie community."***

For sculpting, Sculptris by Tomas Pettersson AKA DrPetter is amazing. In fact, DrPetter is a godsend to the indie community; as well as sculptris, his sound effect generator sfxr, music software musagi and painting app CherryBrush are all really brilliant. I have my suspicious the man is capable of cloning himself or some form of time travel to make as many tools that are of such high quality and have so many features.

THE REAL INVESTMENT IS TIME

I think that's more than enough free software for you to get started making games, but you don't just grab a paintbrush and get to call yourself a painter. Likewise you don't get to download this software and call yourself an indie; you have to put in the time – likely lots of it – to master the skills you need to make the games you want.

You need more than software if you want to be an indie dev; you need determination.

Whenever we learn something new it can be a drag, especially if we start out sucking at what we do (and believe me; your first games will really, really suck) so you need to be the kind of person who can put all their energy into something, and throw it away, keeping only what makes you better at your craft.

Keep practicing, and don't stop. When you feel the strain, when boredom sets in, when *Friends* reruns come on TV, practice harder.

But do dot fear; you are not alone. Sure you aren't in a massive team, and sure you owe more rent this month than you earned last year, but you are only independent from a publisher; you are not at all separate from the indie community.

I can't stress this enough, being an indie can be very, very hard. It can involve all kinds of struggles, some being the hardest of your life. But there are other indies who have been there. If it's just a problem with some code you are writing, or depression has you engulfed, in the indie community we look out for each other, we know what each other faces and we all want to help one another.

Remember, it's easy to get started, all you need is the software, but to keep going you will need the passion and dedication to master your skills and the support and friendship of other indies in the community. A good place to start is tigsource.com.

Those are my three 'must haves' for being an indie, in reverse order of their importance; free (and good) software, total determination and finally getting involved in the indie community.

So, make games and make friends, and maybe someday even make money.

Go indie today.

www.sophiehoulden.com

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Your Move

Sony has drawn up a new blueprint for its games strategy, putting developers at the heart of its planning – whether that's for PlayStation Move or even PlayStation 4. **Rob Crossley** spoke to Worldwide Studios head Shuhei Yoshida to learn more…

Yoshida took over from Phil Harrison as head of SCE WWS in 2008

Few could blame Ken Kutaragi for a touch of arrogance after devising the two most important home consoles in history, one after another.

The Father of PlayStation's legacy will always be that of unshakeable auteurism; both an infections belief and blind stubbornness in the PlayStation design. The first two times, he came good. By the third, he was out.

Four years of the PS3 business offered Sony a stabbing wake-up call for a company that, perhaps, got a little too comfortable in its seat as market leader; a company that lethally built its third home console on astounding tech specs that left developers in the dark.

For the good of the family, the sons had to revolt. Kaz Hirai and Shuhei Yoshida spearheaded a rescue operation as it became clear the PS3 was faltering in its first steps.

And for the man who had to tear up the sacred PlayStation doctrine as a matter of urgency, the startling politeness and kind-hearted spirit of Shuhei Yoshida may come as a total shock.

Yoshida says 'we' when referring to Sony game developers, and he mentions any creative talent – even Valve, and especially Insomniac – with an approving smile.

He speaks with the kindness and goodwill Nintendo execs have built their image from. He is a delightedly busy nerd, buttoned-down by an almighty reputation and responsibility.

He beams when discussing the intricacies of game engineering, like exploiting processing power in a "really, really, really compact way".

He is, to all intents and purposes, not what you expect from the same Japanese exec team that once, when under Kutaragi's rule, proclaimed "the next generation doesn't start until we say it does".

LESSONS LEARNT

And he admits mistakes.

"When Ken Kutaragi moved on and Kaz became the president of SCE, the first thing Kaz said was, 'get Worldwide Studios in on hardware development'," Yoshida tells *Develop* at a quiet hotel suite away from the razzamatazz of this year's E3 showfloor.

"He wanted developers in meetings at the very beginning of concepting new hardware, and he demanded SCE people talk to us [developers]."

Yoshida reveals regret that such a collaborative process was absent when the PS3 was at its final stages of design.

"We [developers] were one of these people that had to go work on PS3 hardware – that was very challenging. It was incredibly powerful, but when we learned about the PS3 specifications, when the hardware was almost done, we found it was so difficult to program on."

> ***"When we learned about the PS3 specs, when the hardware was almost done, we found it was so difficult to program on."***

The solution? Collaboration, says Yoshida: "We immediately focused our efforts to create the low-level libraries and engines for all our first-party teams to use."

During the PS2 era most of Sony's first-party studios used their own game engines and graphics libraries. Initial quibbles that the PS2 was a tough format to crack now seem insignificant compared to PS3, which when its spec sheet was released promised an engineering nightmare.

"In anticipation for very challenging work for PS3 developers, we gathered the most talented engineers from both the US and Europe – so people from Naughty Dog and UK studios – to focus on creating one single engine," he says.

"There are brilliant engineers everywhere, but each studio doesn't have dozens on hand all the time! So we decided to pool all those people together and make a really robust engine that all the teams can use." Yoshida insists this solution marked a significant moment for SCE and that it represented "how we changed our approach to making games".

PLAYSTATION'S NETWORK

Yoshida has been running Sony Worldwide Studios for two years, having stepped up to replace Phil Harrison. It was Harrison who once said that it is collections of games, not single triple-A titles, that sell consoles. By 2006 Sony Worldwide Studios had built some impressive launch-window offerings, such as *Uncharted* and *Motorstorm*, but the company's essential third-party partnerships – where the PS3 range would get its bulk – had come under strain.

Yoshida's solution, as you may have guessed, was collaboration: "We realised, during the year of the PS3 launch, that third-parties were having difficulties making games on PS3. So we thought that, 'okay, we have these engines that we are using, and these engines are built for many different designers, so why not give these engines out'."

It is this progressive alliance that has, in the end, pulled Sony Computer Entertainment out from the paralysis of its own complex designs. And developers, like you, can help shape the company's future.

Yoshida is clear that mistakes of old won't be repeated. He says that a studio-engineer alliance is already in place for some of the firm's

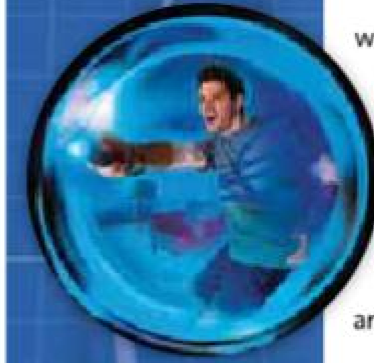
most interesting (and, sadly, secret) platform developments: "We are undergoing many activities that we haven't yet been talking about in public," he says. "Some future platform related activities."

PlayStation 4, then? We're five years into the console cycle - why hasn't it been mentioned?

"Looking from the outside, it was Microsoft that released the first of this generation of consoles,"Yoshida says.

"Naturally, in my opinion, Microsoft will make the first move. Or, because Nintendo's approach was not to upgrade much on its basic hardware – Wii doesn't even support HD resolution – so they might be the first to move.

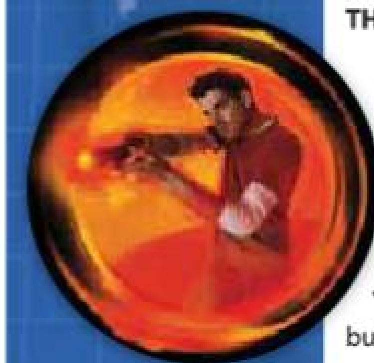
"Probably we should watch these companies, in my opinion. Because PS3 was later than Xbox, and is more powerful, so it has a longer lifespan."



Perhaps, when entombed in print, those words will emanate a kind of console-war mentality that Sony and its competitors are often known for. After all, Sony's fictional PR mouthpiece and 'VP of Everything' Kevin Butler exists for a reason.

But Yoshida is merely being realistic. Sony has many times before outlined a ten-year console support strategy, of which we are approaching half-way point.

THE NEXT MOVE



PlayStation Move, a motion controller that Yoshida was instrumental in the development of, is Sony's latest bid to keep the PS3 a fresh, developer-focused platform of new ideas and diverse opportunities.

The diversity this device represents, says Yoshida, is not just important to PlaySation, but for the industry as a whole.

"Because PS3 is powerful, you can do so much to improve graphical fidelity, and to improve AI, and to improve physics. It all takes a lot of effort, and because so many games are good now, many teams are very comfortably using PS3s, it means that pushing further requires a lot of effort.

"But because Move is a completely new interface, that no one has experienced yet, it's a great opportunity for developers to take advantage of this new capability.

"Games these days take a lot of resources. Games like Killzone, or Uncharted, or God of War – we have large teams who have made games for a long time. But the industry shouldn't be just that.

"The industry shouldn't be just about big games and big projects. There has to be lots of new entrants to the industry that might sound risky, but these things should be tried for the better of the future of the industry."

Reflecting for a brief moment, he says: "I'm a big fan of downloadable games, because that allows small teams to create small content and sell it for a lower price. Move is another avenue. You don't have to create a long adventure to make use of that new interface."

We ask about the thousands, perhaps millions, who have already made clear their indifference towards motion control.

"We've been waiting for people to try Move," says Yoshida. "We've always wanted to say to people 'you will see', but we are a bit more humble," he chuckles.

5
9
4
Grab Arrow!

> **We are undergoing many activities that we haven't yet been talking about in public.**

"We have been really pleased to see some of the articles come out on websites such as *IGN*. Yesterday two editors tried Move and their captions read: 'we are finally excited about motion control!'"

INDUSTRY IN MOTION

Move is another indication of how the industry is shifting at frightening speeds. But no matter how fast it progresses, traps which have claimed victims before still hang over.

Even the iPhone, perhaps the most disruptive game device the industry has ever seen, is threatened by market saturation – an issue which, let's not forget, first crippled the game industry back in the late eighties.

And in the intervening years, one trend has proven hard to break; console add-ons rarely sell. Not enough publishers place faith in them, and so the add-ons have less to shout for, and so fewer are sold, and so less belief is placed in them, and the spiral to discontinuation is already drawn. The failure of the Mega-CD or the 64DD should not be ignored when remarking on the success of the Wii Balance Board.

As Move, Kinect and 3D are all at the mercy of publisher support and market adoption, we tell Yoshida that perhaps an industry recovering from a recession will be less enthused by devices that only appeal to a portion of a console's installed base.

"Some people will like to make conventional games for the largest user base, as you say," he says. "Every year the connectivity to PS3 is increasing, and we are very excited about that. But despite sixty or seventy per cent of people are connecting to the PSN, that means there's thirty or forty per cent who are not.

"So there is that question. Do you want to invest in network features that only cater to the sixty per cent, or do you stick to the whole one hundred per cent? Move is the same thing. It is a peripheral that people have to purchase – do you want to bet your game on this part of the PS3 install base? These are very intimate questions."

Yoshida's answer both cools *Develop*'s cynicism and encapsulates how far Sony has come since it awkwardly kicked a $599 elephant into the room: "But the effort and resources that are required for development on Move can be much lower than making Blu-ray games on the conventional controller," he says.

"Move takes a small fraction of hardware resources – that was a big milestone for us.

"When our software library team was working on Move, they talked to our Worldwide Studios developers and asked about how much CPU time and how much memory they hoped would be used. The developers' answer was zero CPU and zero memory! [laughs] Of course it's impossible. So that pushed them to make it really, really, really compact so many different types of games can adapt it.

"I think Move support for many PS3 games, including *Killzone* and *SOCOM*, is not difficult, because of that very small footprint."

So the strategy for Sony is partly a stealth conversion towards Move – a huge contrast with previous attempts to enforce new directions. It's a unique stance at a time when the wider industry has become predictable again. All three platform holders are shuffling into the designated paths – 3D, motion control, digital distribution. Right now, even if a George Foreman Grill add-on was considered a progressive step for the game business, you can bet all three platform holders would develop one and claim they had been researching a cooking device for over 15 years.

And specifically on the issue of motion control, Sony's shift comes at an opportune time: Microsoft has seeminglyy forgotten why the PS3 suffered at launch. Kinect's specification has been pared down – even Peter Molyneux, has said it has studios "in a sweat". And Sony knows, from painful experience, that it's still the software maestros that determine the fate of the boxes under our TV sets.

The PS3 crash-landed onto the scene and demanded too much from its developers, resulting in a visible lack of support. Yoshida made it his business to ensure that, through a range of initiatives including Move, SCE's home console offers studios an easier time to develop their ideas. Arc may have been a great name for Sony's new stick with a neon bulb, but 'Move' – and what it means for developers – says so much more.

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Charity cases

Martin de Ronde's OneBigGame charity drive is preparing to unleash Masaya Matsuura's WINtA, and poised to reveal more future collaborators. Keen to discover the realities of developing for a good cause, **Will Freeman** caught up with those involved, including the PaRappa the Rapper creator himself…

The idea of developing a game for charity is an easy one to romanticise. Aside from the opportunity to prove the worth of our oft-berated medium as cause for social good, there's the potential for creative freedom, and the chance to escape the bonds typically put upon studios by the demands of retailers and marketers.

But is the idea workable when developers are busy enough with their own commercial projects? Poised to provide some answers is NanaOn-Sha founder Masaya Matsuura, the *PaRapper the Rapper* maestro who is now readying the release of his debut OneBigGame project, *WINtA*.

What encouraged you to develop a title for OneBigGame? What was the appeal?

Masaya Matsuura: I thought that OneBigGame might be a good opportunity to test out some new ways of game production. At first we thought about developing a console game, but due to the open nature and explosive emergence of the iPhone we were finally able to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

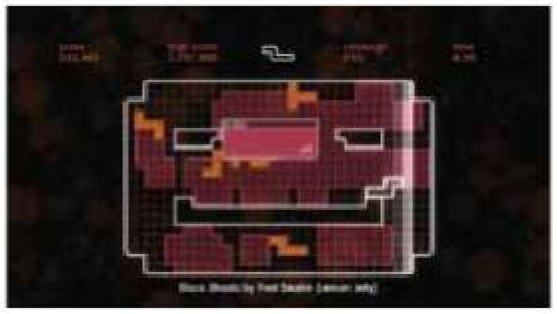
Does developing a game for free and for charity affect the creative process at all?

Right from the start, de Ronde emphasised to me that this was a project to enjoy in our spare time. So in complete contrast to your usual mass production model, it was something to dip into when you had the time, and would start and stop depending on your schedule. I guess you could say it's an exceedingly bottom-up approach.

How has your OneBigGame project informed your game design experience?

I think it's given me the opportunity to take the standard structures of the rhythm game genre and experiment with more far-reached ways of distributing meta-contents.

> ***"As the industry is maturing and becoming mass market, it becomes more important that we take a mature approach to social responsibility."***
>
> Masaya Matsuura, NanaOn-Sha



Is it ever difficult to allocate time and resources to a charity project?

OneBigGame at times encourages us yet at times takes a step back. I think they do whatever they can to encourage a spontaneous approach to achieving our goals.

Certainly the usual severe mass-production approach to games development brings with it its fair share of resource management issues, but we can't really compare this with the more pleasant approach evident with OneBigGame.

However, for a small developer like us with limited resources it takes a great deal of effort to get projects like this underway.

For example, the contributions of Triangle Studios - which is undertaking the actual implementation of the game - has been huge, but nevertheless it still takes a great deal of effort to make a collaboration like this work.

Truth be told, I've never been a huge fan of charity work, and I don't really feel that this is going to change to any great degree - having said that, I'm hoping that my involvement with OneBigGame will not be a one-off, but rather an on-going commitment, and I'd certainly love to drop in and out of future projects even after *WINtA* is done.

ManyGoodCauses

INDUSTRY VETERAN AND FORMER Guerrilla Games commercial director Martin de Ronde set up the OneBigGame initiative, which strives to offer hope to children's projects the globe over, after a flash of inspiration as he digested the coverage celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Live Aid concert.

Why, wondered de Ronde, doesn't the games industry leverage the potential of the game developers and studios that are affectively the celebrities of one of the world's most popular mediums? Unable to find a satisfactory answer to that question, and quick to recognise the quality of many of the unfinished projects that developers begin in their own time, de Ronde established OneBigGame.

Within a relatively short timeframe, Zöe Mode's *Chime* was born, and luminaries like Matsuura and Charles Cecil were on board with projects forthcoming.

"OneBigGame in its current form couldn't have been done in an offline era," explains de Ronde. "Not only do digital distribution systems allow us to cut a lot of corners and exist as a low overhead publisher; the famous names working for us also seemed to be ready for this.

"They are normally working on big blockbusters and over the past few years they have seen more and more small casual titles hit the limelight. So they are curious to be involved in these 'small' projects. And finally, as the industry is maturing and becoming mass market, it starts to become more and more important that we take a mature approach to social responsibility."

It appears that this opportunity to breathe life into projects that would have otherwise sat dormant in the corner of a developer's hard drive is precisely what initially piqued the interest of Matsuura, as well as his contemporaries.

"OneBigGame is a great initiative, for good causes, and it fits with our belief in games as a way of bringing people together," says Zoë Mode's audio director Ciaran Walsh.

"It was also an opportunity for us to do something different, with a lot of creative freedom. We experiment with a lot of creative ideas in 'The Lab', our incubator team, and OneBigGame was a chance for us to showcase that side of what we do.

And Zoë Mode's perspective on balancing paid work with charity work?

"On one hand we had complete creative control which was a rare treat.But we also had to balance developing *Chime* for free alongside paying projects, so we were constrained by time and availability of people. As with any game project there are many things we'd like to have done differently or better but overall we're really happy with how it turned out."

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Field of Dreams

Think EA Sports is still about middling video games and a lack of innovation? Think again. The Canadian studio is at the height of its creative power and developing the most acclaimed titles in its history. **Christopher Dring** travels to Vancouver to learn more about the developer's transformation…

WILLIAMS
90
MADDEN 11

Nestled in the Vancouver hills, EA Sports' Canadian HQ is a sight to behold.

The 400,000 square foot complex boasts its own library, the largest motion capture studio on the planet, an NBA-regulation size indoor basketball court, two 24-hour gyms, a football pitch and a whole lot more.

It is far from your typical studio, but then EA Sports is not your typical developer.

The company behind iconic licensed titles such as *Tiger Woods*, *FIFA*, *NHL*, *NBA* and *SSX* doesn't view itself as a games company that makes sports titles, but rather a sports company that makes video games. It is even ranked as the seventh biggest sports brand on the planet according to *Forbes* magazine.

In fact, EA Sports insists it has never been a studio that builds games for gamers, but creates experiences for sports fans. And these fans demand different things from the developers of typical video games.

EA Sports president Peter Moore, who has held senior roles at Reebok, Sega and Xbox explains: "I was flying to San Francisco once and the guy that checked my passport looked at it and said: 'When am I going to see *Shenmue 3*?' I love that passion. I love the banter going back to the Dreamcast days.

"Sport is a different kind of passion. Real in *Shenmue* was Yu Suzuki's imagination, Peter Crouch is not in anyone's imagination; he plays for Spurs and plays for England. People will criticise us for not getting that look right. What we do can be very polarising."

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

A great example of the way EA Sports straddles the sports and video games sectors is how its technology has been utilised outside of the Vancouver development hub.

TV networks Sky and ESPN have been using EA Sports tech to analyse matches during the World Cup, while its animation engine (ANT) has been used in *Medal of Honor*.

"We do tremendous cross studio sharing," explains Moore. "Feature sharing, technology sharing and great thought sharing with the two teams going back and forth between Vancouver and Orlando [EA Tiburon]. Interestingly we are utilising our engine in some of our FPS games.

"As soldiers run from position to position – and even the bigger games have this – there is kind of a stiffness of the soldier running that would not fly in a sports game. The use of our ANT engine in our FPS games is something you are going to hear more about. The utilisation of technology developed within Sports that uses motion, which can be moved across to our EA Games label, is something I am excited to see."

> ***"While producers' opinions are still valuable, will have to have their views taken into account with the feedback we are getting from consumers."***
>
> Andrew Wilson, Worldwide Dev

RETURN TO FORM

EA Sports has had a fairly mixed track record in games development, though. In its '90s heyday it was renowned for creating the finest sports sims around.

This quality, combined with official licences and EA's marketing muscle, helped the studio become a global sales force worldwide.

But by 2005, the development teams had become complacent. In terms of critical reception, *FIFA* was the poor cousin to rival *Pro Evolution Soccer* whilst 2K's *NHL* and *NBA* franchises were far superior to EA's efforts.

The Vancouver studio secured itself a reputation for making average, iterative games that offered nothing new year-in-year-out.

So in 2007 the EA chief John Riccitiello recruited Moore from his role as head of Xbox – he in-turn brought in some world class development talent to help turn the studio around.

The company dramatically cut the number of games it was working on, put a big focus on quality (*see 'The Power of Metacritic'*), and five years on EA Sports is a studio reborn.

"We are almost half of the SKU count we were at two or three years ago," says senior VP of worldwide development Andrew Wilson. "What we are trying to do is make those games bigger. There were a whole bunch of random games we were making that were not getting the consumer feedback we were looking for."

With a renewed focus, EA Sports' titles began to improve. Last year's *FIFA* secured a 91 per cent Metacritic score – making it the highest rated sports game on the current generation of consoles. *NHL* and *Madden* aren't far behind, with a Metacritic of 88 and 85 respectively. In three short years Moore and co. restored glory to EA Sports.

"There were challenges five years ago in regards quality at EA that has all been put to bed," insists Moore. "We had 20 titles with a Metacritic of 80 plus in our fiscal year."

The firm's newfound confidence in its ability is clear to see in Vancouver. Awards adorn the walls, while the firm is far more bullish about its line-up. When the producers unveiled its new-look *NBA* title – *NBA Elite* – to the press, it boldly claimed the game would match the standards set by *FIFA* and *NHL*. And to make sure it does, the *NBA* team has borrowed technology and even staff from those two franchises.

"Some of the things that work with *FIFA* can work for something like *NBA*," says *FIFA* creative director Gary Paterson. "It is one of the advantages of being at a company as large as EA."

PLAYFISH JOINS THE TEAM

The latest member of the EA Sports squad is social network specialists PlayFish.

The studio, which was bought be EA last year, has just launched its first EA Sports title – *FIFA Superstars* – on Facebook. This collaboration with the Vancouver team has already made a lasting impact.

"The *FIFA* team immediately went met with them," says Moore. "The two teams, with very different skill sets, talked about authenticity being at the core and the use of the *FIFA* licence. Playfish gets it and gets it well. They've never done what we've launched, which is a core authentic sports game.

"The way Playfish develop and maintain a game is completely different to the way that we do it. They create the core game experience and watch it every day. They watch, figure out what is working and not working, and as the days go on they continue to change it."

Wilson adds: "The shift to social and online gaming has made us as game makers significantly more metrics driven. In the early days of building games, the production team was employed as the consumer, and employed for their expertise and their opinion on what makes a great game.

"But what we have seen with social games is that metrics now drives a lot of those decisions, which means the people playing our games are telling us in real time. We always believed that producers, while their

Top: EA Sports boss Peter Moore
Above: EA Sports' worldwide development VP Andrew Wilson

CAPTURE THE MOMENT

IN AUGUST 2005 EA Sports Canada opened its in-house mocap studio. The building is 18,730 square feet in size and features two full size stages that can run simultaneously.

It services all of EA Sports games – with 40 per cent of its workload coming from EA Canada and Black Box.

The outfit has also done work for film, television and advertising.

The studio uses 100 Vicon motion capture cameras and processes 500,000 seconds of animation annually to EA studios. The mocap team are also able to pack up the tech and send it all around the world – pretty useful when they need to meet sporting legends such as Tiger Woods, Roger Federer, Ronaldinho and Thierry Henry and scan their movements for new games.

THE POWER OF METACRITIC

IN RECENT YEARS METACRITIC has become the buzzword at EA Sports as the firm tried to transform its franchises into critical darlings.

Metacritic scores were worked into the development teams' objectives, and the hardest task fell to the *FIFA* crew, who were challenged by EA Sports president Peter Moore to go out and win a 90 Metacritic rating on their next game.

Although the effectiveness of Metacritic is open for debate, using it has paid dividends for EA. But now Moore feels that as the quality has been nailed down it's time to move beyond the score aggregation website.

"I've taken the entire *FIFA* team out for dinner for a tremendous celebration for what they did on *FIFA 10*, because they not only delivered a 90 they delivered a 91," continues Moore.

"In terms of what I want from *FIFA 11*, it is difficult to tell them to go and get a 92 or 93. It is almost impossible to take an iterative annual sports title and get it into the mid-90s. There are no plot lines, no boss characters, no map packs. There will be metrics that I work into their objectives, but I don't think it will be around Metacritic.

"Here in the US *Robin Hood* just come out and it has been ripped apart by the critics, but it made $40m in the first weekend. There is a bunch of games that sell millions of units that only get a mid-70s Metacritic.

"You can break Metacritic down and say 'We can get two extra points by doing this' but it may not actually enhance the gamers' experience, and that is where there is a line we have to be careful we don't cross. It is a bit of a slippery slope if you focus everything on Metacritic."

Above Right: EA's impressive Vancouver campus

opinions are still valuable, will have to have their views taken into account with the feedback we are getting from consumers. We always believed this would happen.

"What the Playfish team has shown us is where we will ultimately end up for all of our businesses. The consumers vote with the way they play, and you respond, and if you respond right you will be successful and if you don't then you're not. That puts the power in the hands of the gamer and I think that is great."

> ***It is a bit of a slippery slope if you focus everything on Metacritic. It may not actually enhance the experience.***
>
> Peter Moore, EA Sports

EVOLVING TECHNOLOGIES

Creating an annual, iterative sports franchise may not sound like every developer's dream, but the EA Sports management encourages its staff to experiment.

The development teams are also working across an incredible 13 platforms – including browsers and iPad – and as EA Sports goes about digitising its business model, management is asking its staff to be innovative with its online and downloadable content plans.

One example of this innovation can be found in *EA Sports MMA*. In this brawler players can create their own fighting event, complete with real-life viewers, and even record their own pre-fight hype videos, which they can upload to the game for the world to see.

And that's not to mention the studio's experiments with 3D, PlayStation Move and 360 Kinect.

"Every new piece of technology has differing levels of investment needed to capitalise on it," explains Wilson.

"Move and Kinect are changing the way we build some games as we look to the future, and the evolution from iPhone to iPad has been an interesting one. It comes down to each piece of technology; some is much easier to build towards while others are a little more complicated.

"The way we measure it is: what's the consumer experience that we get out of the investment? Does it make sense? Does it enhance the game? I look at what we are doing with Move in *Tiger Woods*, and Move fundamentally changes how you play that game on PlayStation 3. And we look to invest in things that do that; things that change the way you play. We don't invest in technology for technologies sake.

Moore concludes: "There will be a lot of trial and error. I read the forums and people do mock your decisions and say you should be doing this or doing that. But that is why we get paid; to make these decisions. Move, I think, we can do a bunch of stuff with that we have done very well with Wii. For Kinect we have to figure out as an industry what unique experiences take advantage of that technology. I don't think it will be about *Madden Kinect* or *FIFA Kinect*. It will be about brand new experiences that bring that technology to life."

3D FOCUS

3D WAS ONE OF the big talking points at E3 this year, with almost every major publisher and developer looking to implement the technology.

However, for EA Sports 3D is proving a little more difficult, with early trials throwing up a series of challenges for the developer.

"We are looking at 3D but there is some technical challenges," says EA Sports president Peter Moore.

"The one thing we are learning is that we can't use the existing in-game camera angles. I saw *Madden* in 3D, and there were some very cool cuts, but when the camera moved up high, you couldn't tell so much; it wasn't adding value to the experience. You've got to have different camera angles, you've got to get lower, and you've got to have depth of field to actually see it.

"James Cameron built his movie and technology from day one saying 'this is going to be 3D,' from a director point-of-view you create environments and scenes purely to show of the fact it is three dimensional. And that is different to what we have right now, I've seen a number of our games running in 3D, but what it has taught me is that there are frame rate issues our team have to sort out and it is not easy. And you've got to look different to just porting to 3D, because 50 per cent of what you are seeing is taking advantage and you can't event tell it is 3D, and I'm not sure it adds value to the experience. But we are keeping a close eye on 3D."

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At the 4-front

As part of Develop's ongoing Game Changers series , which looks at companies redefining games, we turn our attention once more to Channel 4. **Stuart Richardson** thought it high time the broadcaster's Alice Taylor explained how the firm is still pushing educational gaming...

Channel 4 has a history of breaking new ground in entertainment. Lesbian kisses, reality TV, free film stations and 3D TV. The broadcaster's educational output, however, rarely attracted much attention over the years.

Things began to change in the latter part of 2007, however. Alice Taylor arrived from the Beeb in the summer to take over as comissioning editor for the education department. A few months later, and a substantial chunk of that department's budget was shifted from broadcast media to digital media. Taylor explained the move as helping the educational content reach its intended audience of 14 to 19-year-olds, who were for the most part otherwise engaged during the ring-fenced time-slot for TV content aimed at them, which had been going out between 9.30 and midday on weekdays.

The change was very successful. Roughly half of the annual department budget now finds its way to UK indie studios who are developing content like the BAFTA-winning title *Bow Street Runner*. Beatnik Games, Littleloud Studios, Zombie Cow and Six to Start are just a few of the other UK indies to have benefitted so far.

When *Develop* caught up with Taylor again recently, it quickly became clear that the Channel 4 education department had no intention of slowing down its output.

"We've just signed Jim Rossignol's *Big Robot*, so he's off to think about cities and happiness for us," she says.

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BREED WITH ME...
NEWS

> ***We're currently smiling at Android. Although it's yet to show up stats-wise in our 'we go were teens go' mantra, we're confident that it will.***
>
> Alice Taylor, Channel 4

"We've also received our finished proposal from Failbetter Games on the theme of death and interpersonal relationships. Our first big Unity game, *Ada*, is nearly in beta. *Routes* just won the Prix Jeunesse and *Smokescreen* won best game at SXSW. We've also got a growing pile of pitches in response to our recent briefing for what we're after in 2011."

The workload alone speaks volumes about the level of passion Taylor and all at Channel 4 are approching their work with. Taylor is also keen to mention the new ways in which their games will be heading out into the world.

"We're currently smiling at Android. Although it's yet to show up stats-wise in our 'we go were teens go' mantra, we're confident that it will," she explains. "As for the non open-source platforms, iPhone/iPod Touch, consoles and the like, we're still putting out content there were possible, but there's a submission process in place which means we have less control over our publishing ability."

FUTURE PERFECT

The changes that have already and are now occurring within the games development industry also seem to interest Taylor and shape her plans for the future.

"Digital distribution, and more powerful home PCs and handhelds, means that we can make fabulous games and reach millions of people without having to spend millions."

"There's a middle range now that didn't exist before, the fascinating space between one-person-hobby and triple-A behemoth, and it has the largest audience size as well. That's where most of our indies are already, ten to 20 people on average. Some say it's like games development used to be, back in BBC Micro and Acornsoft days."

Taylor is a great figurehead for the continuing educational games project at Channel 4. Her dedication to and command of the subject is obvious, but she is also very affable, and her enthusiasm is easy to catch.

"It's fertile ground. Education has a special contract; as we have a public purpose to fulfil, so our games are paid for outright, upfront and during development with final payment on successful launch," she says of the process behind the publishing.

"Our games have no outright commercial remit, but educational and reach targets. The developer gets to keep the underlying IP, and commercial exploitation isn't entirely ruled out either."

As for the long-term, Taylor is somewhat at-ease for the moment. And why not? In games Channel 4 is doing very good work indeed.

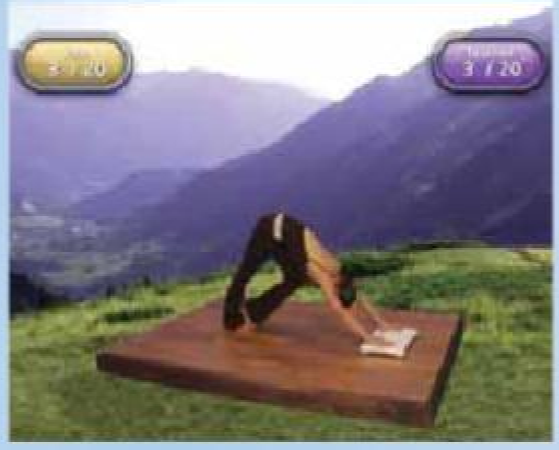
Above: Channel 4 Education's enthusiastic commissioning editor Alice Taylor

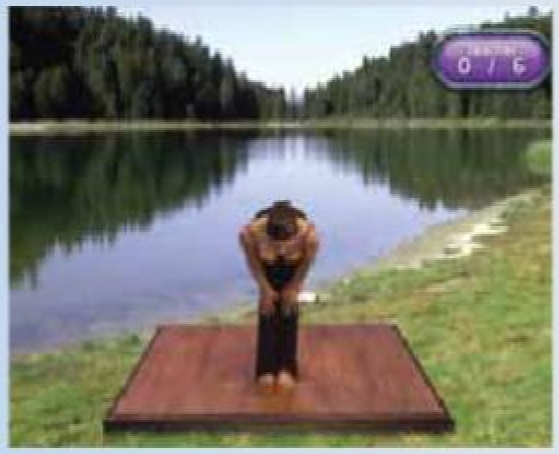
IN ASSOCIATION WITH...

Amiqus Games is a leading provider of specialist talent to the video games Industry. The company recruits for some of the world's premier studios for artists, animators, producers, programmers, designers and executives such as studio heads and director level roles.

Fitness thirst

For the next in our series of Game Changers spotlights focusing on the studios and companies evolving the face of the development sector, **Will Freeman** pays a visit to fitness and video capture experts Lightning Fish…





Above: Lightning Fish CEO and co-founder Prytherch, and right, NewU in action

Oxford developer Lightning Fish is only two-years old, but in that time has grown in size from its three founders – Simon Prytherch, Mike Montgomery and David Hunt – to a headcount of forty.

The studio first built its reputation creating the *NewU: Fitness First* exercise games, which quickly became recognised as a showcase for the potential of filmed actors in physically interactive video games. In fact, the studio has carved a productive niche for itself crafting motion-tracking games using video–based performers, and proprietary tech to support that drive.

"We work with Microsoft Kinect, Sony Move and Wii," reveals CEO and co-founder Prytherch, demonstrating his studio's confidence with new tech. "We have also developed our own technology that works on any camera-based system such as netbooks and laptops."

Presently Lightning Fish is going through an impressive period of transformation and expansion, as it readies *Get Fit With Mel B* for an end of year release on all three lead console formats.

"Lightning Fish are transitioning from a single team to multiple teams working on multiple titles on all the major platforms," explains Prytherch. "Our core creative and technical teams are in Banbury, but in June 2010 we opened a new studio in Pune, India.

"There are certain skills which are easier to find in India such as tools programmers, artists, Flash programming and QA. The key skills in the UK are console technology, management and creative game design. Each studio will play to its own strengths to create a bigger and better Lightning Fish."

WELL KINECTED

Not only has a three-man team managed to expand on an ambitious global scale, but Lightning Fish's *NewU: Fitness First* games have done very well for themselves despite going head to head with the genre Goliath that is *Wii Fit*.

The reason for that, claims Prytherch, is because the team use real actors rendered using video technology, meaning that for the wider non-gamer audience the virtual trainers are recognisable, realistic and importantly, approachable.

"Computer generated characters that try to be realistic feel scary to the user," suggests the co-founder, hinting at the famous pitfall that is the uncanny valley.

"They are too perfect in their animation and expressions. Our video actors have more personality, plus it allows us to naturally place the video image of the player alongside the actor on Move and Kinect titles within the same environment."

> ***"Computer generated characters that try to be realistic feel scary to the user. They are too perfect in their animation and expressions."***
>
> Simon Prytherch, Lightning Fish

Had Microsoft and Sony not moved to ape the fundementals of the Wii's control system in such a manner, then Lightning Fish would surely have found another route to success. As it stands though, the new 'platforms' have allowed Prytherch and his colleagues to grab the bull by the horns and lead the charge to support the second wave of current-gen motion control.

"The development of new controller devices such as Move and Kinect has enabled us to bring our games to new platforms," says Prytherch.

"The further development of camera-based tracking systems will see a greater market for our skills and our games.

"We are the only studio that I am aware of that specialises in motion tracking, gesture recognition, gesture definition and using your whole body as a controller. We have been developing our technology and tools for over two years, so we have a very sophisticated production process. This allows us to create huge amounts of gesture-based content cheaply and quickly."

Aside from an ability to simultaneously offer expedience and quality, Lightning Fish has also evolved a shrewd knack for recognising industry trends from outside the sphere of development, and taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by such fashions.

Prytherch is quick to acknowledge that there are a smaller number of publishers who want to commission fewer retail titles, which in turn means there a less opportunities for developers in the boxed product retail market.

"As digital distribution ramps up there are more openings for developers to create income directly from consumers," confirms Prytherch, adding: "But in most cases the money generated from digital is not yet enough to replace what is lost in the retail side.

"Therefore at the moment most developers of the size of Lightning Fish and larger need to balance between the two. We are fortunate to be working on retail titles for the major consoles. We are also working on DLC for these titles plus supporting applications for other smaller platforms."

That added value digital content gives Lightning Fish additional experience, and allows the team to gradually shift some of the earning potential from the traditional retail to a wider variety of channels.

Nominated for the Best New Studio gong in the forthcoming Develop Awards, Lightning Fish stands out for its achievement and biz dev in a relatively short time, but perhaps its real secret to success comes from its heritage. The developer's staff shares experience of around 150 games on every platform in every genre.

Increasingly, Lightning Fish is beginning to read as 'big fish'.

amiqus GAMES

IN ASSOCIATION WITH…

Amiqus Games is a leading provider of specialist talent to the video games Industry. The company recruits for some of the world's premier studios for artists, animators, producers, programmers, designers and executives such as studio heads and director level roles.

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Codemasters: Taking aim

Codemasters VP of studios Gavin Cheshire and SVP of production Jamie Macdonald speak to **Stuart Richardson** about the future of one of the UK's biggest studios in the wake of a huge cash investment from Indian firm Reliance Big Entertainment...

In 25 years Codies has amassed quite a trophie collection

It's a cynical world sometimes. When, in early April this year, Codemasters announced that Indian multimedia company Reliance Big Entertainment had purchased a fifty per cent stake in their business, the internet lit-up with angry suspicions about the future of the Codemasters workforce.

"Interesting," wrote one anxious reader of *Develop*'s online report on the deal.

"I wonder how long it will take before there is a 'strategic' move of development to India?"

The speculation and insinuation was not lost on Codemasters.

"We noticed that straight away – forums telling us that we were going to be packing up and moving to India," says an almost exasperated Gavin Cheshire, Codemasters VP of studios.

"I can safely say that this is absolutely not the case. There are obviously some 'strategic' moves for both partners, but in terms of development at the level we're at, it's very much about Reliance investing in our skills and abilities over here in the UK."

In terms of what Reliance actually are paying for, both Cheshire and recent Codies arrival Jamie Macdonald are keeping a lot under their hats. They are, however, insisting that any expansions will happen in the UK.

> ***We are focused on EGO 2.0 at the moment, which will be coming in with a massive title that we can't talk about just yet.***
>
> Gavin Cheshire, Codemasters

"We will be looking to expand in Birmingham, Southam and Guildford and building on other oppourtunities as and when they come along," Cheshire enthuses.

"So no move to India. This is about building on the Codemasters that already exists."

Codemasters has often exhibited a fearless desire to generate expansion and success. From the early multi-platform releases for its acclaimed budget series of titles, through the controversial partnership with Camerica and the release of the Game Genie and onto the confident footholds worked into North America over the past decade, the firm has thrived in the same industry scene many other studios have found untenable over the years.

The sensitive way in which it has continued to work with the lucrative *Colin McRae* franchise also indicates a level of maturity that many would not have attributed the Codies with, way back when.

Macdonald, current SVP of production after a successful turn at Sony, is equally enthusiastic about the potential for the firm to grow after this latest deal.

"It's very much a good fit for both parties, which gives us the financial muscle to push on to the next level," he says.

"We've got a major launch with *F1* coming up in September and developed at our Birmingham studio, and we hope to draw new IP from there. Our Guildford studio is working

Above: Codemasters' staff work hard and play hard across the firm's three UK sites

hard on *Bodycount*, and we will be looking to to take that franchise further and futher with the addition of more IP.

"In Southam it's full steam ahead with the next iteration in our *Flashpoint* series, as well as the next *Dirt* and *Grid*. It'll be interesting to see how it all pans out."

Cheshire also points out that a recuitment drive is now on the cards.

"We are currently in the middle of a major recuitment drive across all three of those sites. There will be major expansion in that sense over the coming year."

This is Macdonald's area of expertiese, with his hiring of people from outside of the development industry at Sony being well documented at the time.

"The industry is now aimed at a more digitally focussed world, and I think it is incumbent upon us to look outside of it. When I was at Sony we had great success bringing people in from different digital media, so that's a possibility," he explains.

Of course new staff are all well and good, but Macdonald also points out that he is impressed with existing Codemasters staff, as well as staff retention.

"I have been very pleasently surprised at the very low churn rate here at Codemasters. There is a huge wealth of talent and luckily for us they really enjoy working here."

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Being a major studio in 2010 dictates the necessity for working with external developers; not just as a popular method of maximising the potential of existing or new IP, but as a fundemental prerequisite in keeping up with the competition.

Gavin Cheshire is keen to mention Codemasters' growing aims in this area.

"We are seeking young, vibrant developers in the UK and Europe to work with. Something that I have noticed of late is that there is a groundswell of new small developers in browser-based and iPhone gaming," he says.

"I met a few of them in Dundee recently and there are a number all around the country. To build good working relations with that talent base would really give us access to great new ideas and very smart people who could be so effective here at Codemasters."

And who could claim to be a major development player without some interesting propriatory technology to back up your games with? Codemasters' EGO engine powers the lion's share of the studio's output, and Cheshire tells us that its future is assured in upcoming output.

"The next *F1* will show where EGO has got to at this stage. I think people will agree that it has probobly got the best weather of any game ever seen. It is very powerful, but is also in an intricate stage right now," he explains.

"We are focused on EGO 2.0 at the moment, which will be coming in with a massive title that we can't talk about just yet. That will really keep us cutting-edge."

There certainly seems to be plenty for everyone at Codies to think about, but that they are planning on staying in the UK now seems certain. It just remains to be seen what exactly they do with all that new cash.

"Actually, I think we are busier now than we have ever been before," Macdonald concludes.

Codemasters VP of studios Gavin Cheshire (left), and SVP of production Jamie Macdonald

Nine nifty facts about GAIKAI

Rob Crossley offers a step by step guide to the Gaikai cloud streaming service…

Does a good thing ever present its own problems? Quite often, actually. Ask the Gaikai team.

The company's co-founders have in the last two years built a cloud streaming service of staggering flexibility and simplicity. And the problem with that was deciding where to go with the technology. Games or computer apps? Subscription service or ad-supported free-to-play? Full games or demos? All could work, but what to pine for?

The three Gaikai co-founders eventually opted for game demos in the first phase of the company's business plan. But with phase two (full game streaming) already pencilled into the company diaries, *Develop* presents a list of nine things you need to know about Gaikai as it stands today.

Develop also spoke to two of the firm's co-founders, Andrew Gault and Rui Pereira, to offer input.

1. GAIKAI MAKES MONEY FOR OTHERS LIKE THIS...

The streaming technology will provide game demos across a broad range of websites – from core gamer news sites, to a publisher's own product page, to something like a game's listing on Amazon.

After completing the Gaikai-powered demo, the player will be redirected to a product page where they can buy the game they just sampled.

The allure of this service, of course, is that people who have just played the demo are generally far more likely to buy the game if a 'buy now' icon is thrown under their nose.

Who determines where the player will be redirected will be the one who pays for the Gaikai demo service.

So, a publisher may want to redirect a player to its own digital store, or it may want to direct players to an online retailer. If it decides where the player ends up, it pays for the service.

"But I'm sure a publisher won't mind if a retailer pays for a demo and directs players to their own online store," adds Gault. "Because ultimately, the retailer is still selling the publisher's product."

But some game websites can benefit as much as the publishers and retailers, as Pereira explains: "Some websites, such as *IGN*, have their own digital download store. *IGN*, in fact, has this games portal called Direct2Drive, and if Gaikai were in place it would act as a bridge between the main *IGN* website and its store.

"If a Gaikai demo of a game could appear on its IGN review page, for example, it would have reached an audience who are clearly already interested in the product."

2. GAIKAI MAKES NO MONEY FROM SALES

You may have thought that – since Gaikai is a service that sends people to product pages – the group would take a slice of game sale revenues. That was a temptation eventually snubbed out, Gault explains.

"It would ultimately be a bad idea. As soon as we try and take a cut of the sale, that's when we'd face problems. Even if it was something like an 80/20 or 30/70 split, I imagine publishers and retailers will be turned off. We don't want any of that."

Gaikai is a business that isn't built on cutting into sales revenues. Instead, it is a service that will be bankrolled by marketing expenditure – by offering a service it hopes is regarded as better targeted than what's available today.

"Publishers pay huge sums of money to get their games recognised," says Pereira.

"Banner ads on websites, billboard ads, magazine ads, publicity stunts, these all cost publishers and we are offering a targeted alternative which we see as comparatively cheap," he adds.

3. GAIKAI'S BUSINESS MODEL IS '$0.01 PER MINUTE'

So how does the service make its money? Simple, it charges for the streaming of demos, at $0.01 per minute for each user.

"And it's risk free," confirms Pereira. "If no-one wants to play a demo, no one will stream it and no one will be charged. And those who play the demo most are more likely to buy."

The Gaikai team is confident that the one-cent-per-minute charge is low risk, as it will offer game access to consumers who already have an interest in playing the game, and thus will more likely buy the game after a brief play. A one hour demo session, costing the retailer or publisher $0.60, may be more than enough to convince the consumer to purchase a $39.99 digital title.

David Perry outlines the potential of Gakai at the recent E3

4. GAIKAI IS WINNING OVER PUBLISHERS

The first big publisher to throw its weight behind Gaikai is EA, which at E3 announced it will use the service for franchises such as *The Sims, Battlefield: Bad Company, Dragon Age, Mass Effect, Medal of Honor* and *Need for Speed*.

"Each EA franchise will get the latest additions on an ongoing basis," says Gault.

He adds: "The EA deal, for us, is the start. We wanted to set up our business model so that it's impossible for publishers to say no. There's no need to try and steal anyone's business, because the second we try to do that we'll hit problems."

The group said it expects to score deals with all major publishers by the end of the year.

5. GAIKAI COULD EVEN REVOLUTIONISE QA TESTING

Another benefit the Gaikai system introduces is, perhaps surprisingly, of great value to QA testers, who could be set to use the service for testing.

"Our idea is simple," says Gault. "Game testers can go through a game on Gaikai, which will stream the data and capture what's happening on a rolling recorder.

"When something unwanted happens, like the game crashes, we can automatically and instantaneously email a small 30 second video of that problem to the dev team.

"So no longer would a problem be typed onto a keypad or written on paper, problems would be instantly sent to dev teams and they will be able to see exactly what happened."

That could spell the end for poorly communicated error reports, and indeed could even have an impact on the culture of QA itself.

"But," Gault clarifies: "we haven't worked out a solid business model for this. It's not as set in stone, but we expect our costs to be covered."

6. GAIKAI CAN BE PLACED ON ANY WEBSITE, ON MOST DEVICES

The cloud streaming service has been built on the philosophy that 'friction' between the publisher and the market can be completely eliminated.

Downloading times, registration pages and installs all offer players a reason to lose interest. Gaikai wants people to play demos within seconds of having an impulse to play them.

As such, the service has been made as flexible as possible. Gault says that embedding Gaikai onto a website requires a "single line of code", and it uses tools such as Flash, Java and Silverlight so it is optimised for all versions of every single internet browser.

"And for the future we're looking at HTML 5," promises Gault, "which would mean just having a web browser should be enough."

He adds: "Our philosophy is to get games everywhere. We don't want to turn anyone away because they use different platforms and different technologies."

David Perry – the third founder of Gaikai – has also touted the possibility of releasing a Gaikai app for iPhone and iPad. He also recently hinted that the service can be embedded on Facebook, and assured that even stereoscopic 3D can be displayed as well.

7. GAIKAI OFFERS INSIDER PLAY DATA

As hinted by the fact that Gaikai can offer error reports during QA testing, the service is also able to analyse huge amounts of player data.

This process isn't new. Valve's Steam service uses analytics to adjust its games post-release. If an unsuspectingly large portion of players keep dying on a certain point in a level, for example, Valve will typically release a patch that makes the area easier to get through.

"The game development model has changed since the arrival of social games," says Gault. "The way games used to be made was dictated by a game designer. The designer would say 'this is what our game should be' – and sometimes they get it right and sometimes they get it wrong.

"The power of social game groups like Zynga, with *Farmville*, is that the group collect a lot of data showing all kinds of info, from how often a button is clicked from where it is positioned, to how often people use certain items, and so on.

"This kind of data is replacing the main game designer's role. Analytics can dictate what people like. We want to offer game betas out via Gaikai, and during this process, we can feed back player analytics that offer logs of player data that can build a picture of what's going on."

8. GAIKAI PROMISES A SWIFT AND SIZEABLE ROI

"An investment of $5 million would give us an inventory for 350 million minutes of play time a month," says Gault.

Taking into account the one-cent-per-minute business model, 350 million minutes equals max revenues of $3.5 per month – that's from a one-time investment of $5 million.

That's on the proviso, of course, that all the 350 million minutes will be used in a given month.

Gaikai has this year obtained $15 million from two investment rounds.

9. GAIKAI DEMOS CAN END GAME DEMO HELL

Game demos may be one of the most cherished freebies for the market, but developers are often glad to see the back of them. In fact, Crytek CEO Cevat Yerli recently told *Develop* that the free downloadable samples are not sustainable, due to the added pressure they put on studios to be built in such short notice.

Gaikai doesn't necessarily need to stream the traditional customised game demo. The group is welcome to stream just a portion of a game – be it the first two levels or a key moment in the latter stages.

Publishers are encouraged to send to Gaikai the full game along with save point data, allowing only a portion of that full game to be streamed.

But if that is such a good idea in the first place, we ask, why haven't developers and publishers pursued this route before?

"Firstly, in order to play just a sample of a game – without the developer having to customise anything – the demo file would have to be substantially larger than the size of the sample data.

"It may even have to be the full game with save data attached, so this is tens of gigabytes potentially.

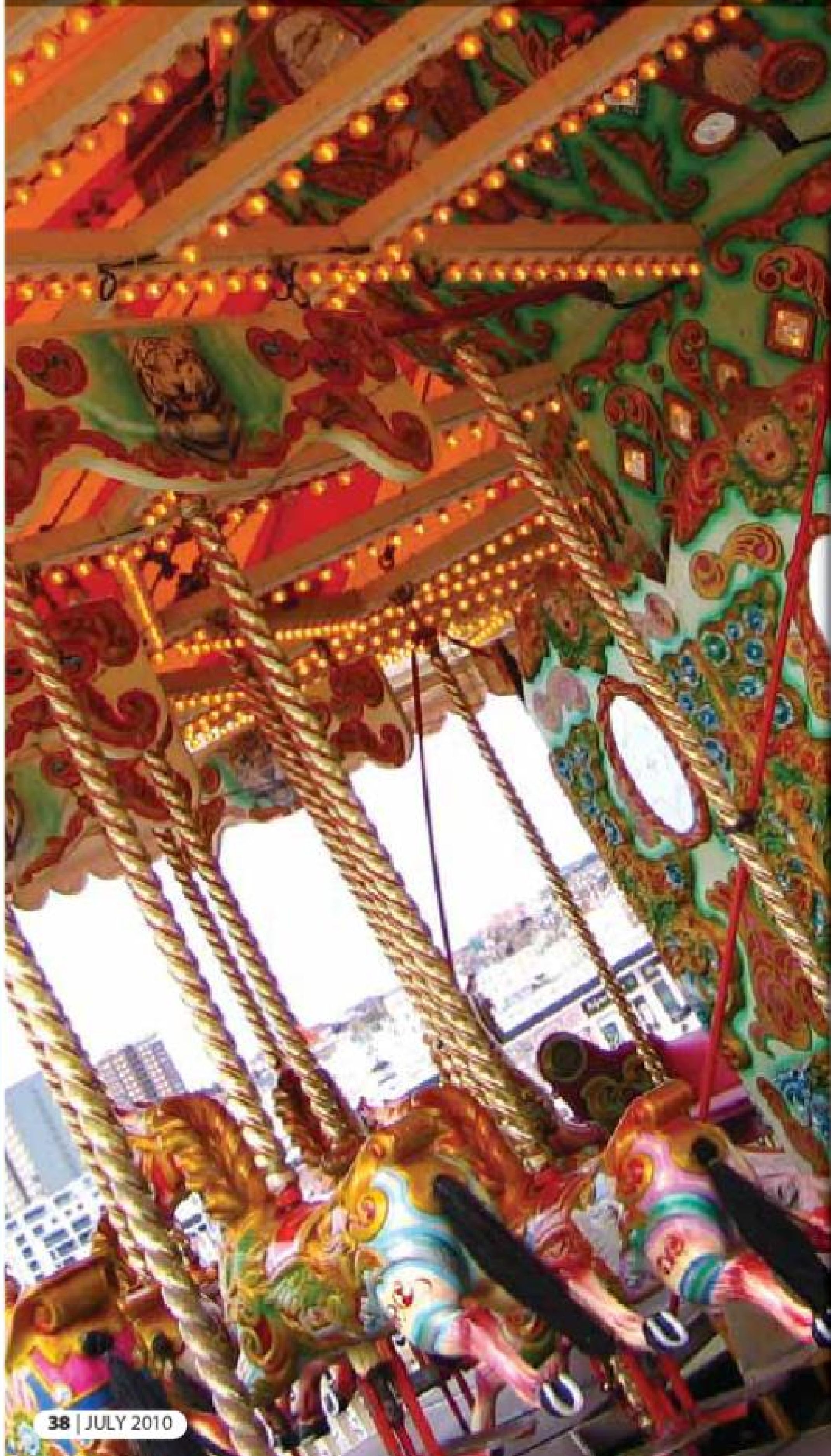
"That's expensive to serve and unappealing in size for the customer.

"Secondly, if publishers start offering up large chunks of game data – as opposed to customised demo data – then that data could be cracked and pirated. We'll have the full game data on our servers, but what we stream can't be hacked."

Gaikai co-founders Rui Pereira (top) and Andrew Gault (bottom).

Brighton Sparks

Brighton's reputation as a development hub is almost as infamous as its bohemian social scene. **Will Freeman** heads south to see if the sun is still shining on the city's studios…



BRIGHT STARS

Ali Kord, Director of Technology, Animazoo

Distinct from our other roundtable contributors, Animazoo builds inertial motion capture systems. Housing both its administrative and manufacturing facilities in Brighton, Animazoo has seen its technology used in some 43 countries.
www.animazoo.com

Richard Leinfellner, CEO, Babel Media

With a number of international locations to its name, the outsource specialist is headquartered in Brighton, where it provides services including functionality QA, gameplay QA, localisation QA, translation, audio, porting and deployment.
www.babelmedia.com

Tony Beckwith, Vice President and General Manager, Black Rock Studio

Part of the Disney Interactive family of development studios, Black Rock's racing output is internationally regarded, with *Split/Second Velocity* most recently impressing with some truly outstanding visuals.
www2.disney.co.uk/disneyinteractivestudios/blackrockstudio/

Danny Isaac, Studio Manager, Relentless Software

Most famous as the creator of *Buzz*, Relentless remains one of Brighton's most high profile studios. More recently the Relentless team created its first self published game, *Blue Toad Muder Files* – a digitally distributed murder mystery comedy title.
www.relentless.co.uk

Ben Hebb, Art Director, Zoë Mode

Zoë Mode specialises in music and party games with social credentials. Recently it crafted *Chime* for the OneBigGame charity, and has in past years contributed to triple-A music and party franchises including *SingStar*, *Guitar Hero*, *Sing It* and *Eye Toy*.
www.zoemode.com

What is it about Brighton that makes it such a great place to develop games?

Danny Isaac, studio manager, Relentless Software: Brighton's a great city to live and work in; it feels young, creative and vibrant. There's a great mix of cultures here so wherever you come from, you'll feel at home in Brighton, which helps when recruiting.

From a business sense Brighton's well located; you can get to central London in about an hour while Gatwick is only a short distance away, and of course compared to working in a big city the daily commute is much less stressful.

Tony Beckwith, vice president and general manager, Black Rock Studio: Brighton is a vibrant young city. It's a fantastic place to live: London-by-sea; the San Francisco of the UK. This is the sole reason why a large development community has sprung up from practically nothing just ten years ago.

Ben Hebb, art director, Zoë Mode: Its proximity to London is an obvious win, both from a business and personal development perspective. We can easily visit publishers and trade shows, and access all of the capital's art galleries and specialist exhibitions. The size of Brighton also makes for an easy commute.

It's jam-packed full of creative types. It's buoyant, vibrant, active and always has new music, art and weird and wonderful street theatre to enjoy. And of course, there is the beach. There's nothing like a stroll to the pebbles of a lunchtime, sipping a cold beer or snaffling a bag of chips.

Richard Leinfellner, CEO, Babel Media: There's great availability of staff and, in our case, also the fact many are multilingual. It's also a great place to live. Many of our workers are contract based due the cyclical nature of our business. Brighton and Hove is ideal for this as we have a large student population. Many people, like me, come here to go to a great party by the beach, and 20 years later suddenly find they ended up living here by accident.

Ali Kord, director of technology, Animazoo: To be able to live here as the boss.

And what of the challenges specific to the area? Would you offer any note of caution to a studio considering a move to the city?

Beckwith: It would be helpful if there was more Government aid or grants available to studios in our area. Brighton is big now but it would probably rival some of the Canadian cities for the number and scale of its development studios if we had had more help. There are hundreds of people working in the games industry in Brighton. Some of the Canadian cities number employees in the thousands – and these gaming centres didn't even exist ten years ago.

Office space is also a challenge in the area and always has been in the ten years that we've been here.

Leinfellner: Being seen by the development agencies as 'the prosperous South East', there is virtually no help available – financial incentive-wise or otherwise – compared to say further north or Scotland, or abroad where I have seen some great government and private partnerships.

> ***"Brighton is big, but it would probably rival some of the Canadian cities for the number and scale of its studios if we had had more help from the Government."***
>
> Tony Beckwith, Black Rock Studios

That is, other than the occasional visit from someone from SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) who generally tells you: 'Yes there is no money in the South. By the way, we are reorganising again, and quite honestly we really can't do anything too useful for you.' Compare and contrast this to Montreal's focus on becoming media hub and the differences leap out at you.

We now have more than 300 people at Babel Montreal and are still growing, mainly because I really get a sense they want us to be there and will help all they can to make it happen.

Finally, as we are all now looking for UK Government cost cutting to balance the budget, I could suggest a few right away.

Seriously, if you are starting up and looking for Government help, you may be better off elsewhere. If you want a 'cool' place to start and grow your company, with great talent Brighton is for you.

Kord: Also, talents tend to like living more than working, which can be turned into a plus if you understand the dynamics. The other main issue is affordable housing for your crew.

Isaac: Central office space has been an issue for us. Brighton's a small city and with our success at Relentless and subsequent growth, finding adequate office space is an ongoing challenge.

Hebb: People are often surprised by the cost of living in Brighton, both as business owners and personal property hunters. Prices are comparative to London.

Are trade industry organisations in any way an important part of the Brighton games development scene? Do they have much of an impact in the area?

Kord: No.

Isaac: Although not specific to Brighton, Tiga has done a great job representing the development community and has been instrumental in making sure politicians and consumers get a balanced views of our community and the products we create.

Locally, Wired Sussex has been very proactive and is a great resource for linking game development and new media companies together. They've been behind driving a number of initiatives developing creative office space which in turn supports the growth for digital companies in Brighton.

Hebb: We support their initiatives and often refer to their website for hot tips on what's going on in the locality.

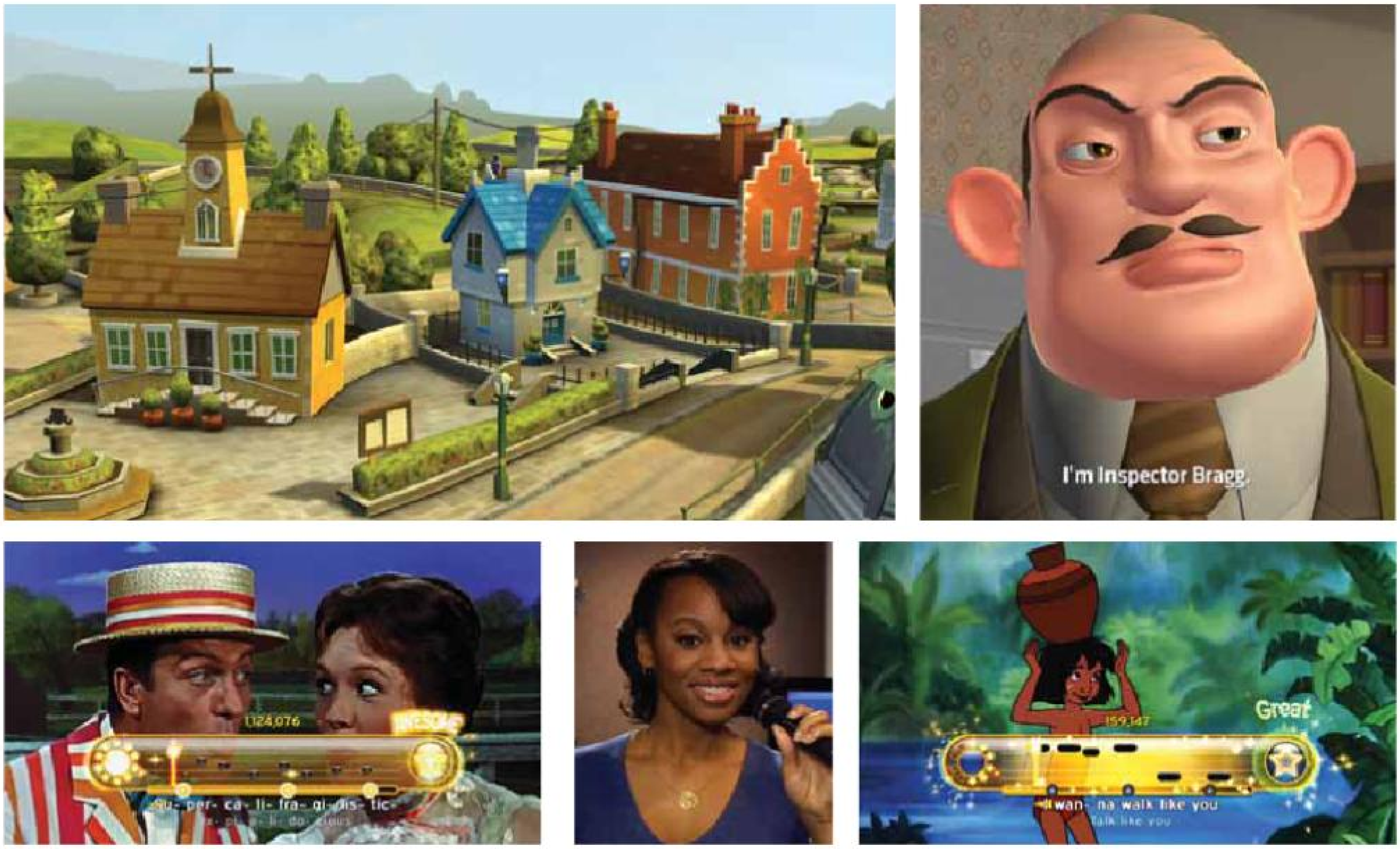
Leinfellner: If you measure success on press coverage of intentions, and photo opportunities, it feels like there is some progress. However, in terms of actual delivery of benefits to the sector or region progress is virtually non-existent. The trade bodies generally end up representing the minority interests of the people on their boards and major funders, so I would need to be convinced they offer real value for money to the sector as a whole.

Beckwith: I think they try their best.

Do you have a positive relationship with the universities and other educational establishments local to Brighton? Are they important to you?

Beckwith: Absolutely, but we are global in our reach. Our employees – and especially our graduate population – are a truly international bunch. However we have partnered with some new businesses that have sprung out of the local universities, including Vertical Slice, which is a relatively new Useability Lab; very useful for focus

Above: Animazoo's full body Gypsy-7 motion capture suit. Right: Split/Second



Above: Relentless' Blue Toad Murder Files (top), and Zoë Mode's Disney Sing It: Family Hits (bottom)

testing our products locally and getting feedback on our user interfaces.

Isaac: We have great relationships with the educational centres in the area. We've often presented to students at the University here; just recently I presented to the Informatics school at Sussex University. We've also had success with our intern program as well as being involved in a number of post graduate research collaborations.

Hebb: Our relationships with the local educational establishments are very important to us. A couple of years ago we supplied all the art mentoring for the Dare to be Digital project when it was based at Brighton University. We offer 'portfolio clinics' and regularly bring in students to do two week to six month placements with us. It's great to get their fresh and youthful take on our projects.

Leinfellner: The Sussex and Brighton universities are really helpful. We flyer at their sites and advertise notices in their careers office and job boards. Brighton Gumtree is also a great site as it is used a lot by local companies and local jobseekers.

Above: Animazoo's Brighton motion capture facility in use

Is sourcing and holding onto staff in Brighton relatively easy? Is the city a boon to you as an employer?

Hebb: Yes. You just can't beat Brighton on a sunny day.

Isaac: Relentless has had good success finding and retaining our staff. Being in Brighton has helped; it's a great city and comes into its own during the summer months. That said wherever you are, if the work-life balance is poor it really doesn't matter where your offices are located.

Beckwith: The city is brilliant draw. Our young, great talent is a perfect fit for the type of people who like to live in this cool, hip city.

Leinfellner: Many people who come down to Brighton end up staying; being down here is definitely a plus. Many hires stay a long time and if they do move they also stay local. There is local competition for good people. However I consider that as quite healthy as it keeps us all on our toes.

> ***Everyone knows everyone here. There are differences in our projects, but there is also some crossover, which in turn leads to mutual respect.***
>
> Ben Hebb, Zoe Moe

How close is the Brighton games development scene as a community? Is that aspect important to you?

Leinfellner: It's not formally close, in that we host wine and cheese parties. However most people here have worked together no more than two jobs ago, so you are always meeting them in pubs etc.

It's a very close-knit community; everyone knows each other and generally has amusing stories to tell over a beer.

Hebb: It seems that everyone knows everyone in the development scene here. We're aware of what the other companies are up to, and although there are differences in our projects, there is also some crossover, which in turn leads to a mutual respect. This is important to nurture for the benefit of all our businesses growth.

Beckwith: We're very close. We talk fairly often. We're all working in different areas of specialisation so we tend to complement each other.

I don't think a lot of poaching goes on because we're each looking for different things in our people.

For example, Black Rock makes high quality racing games. I don't need engineers who specialise in singing or quiz games. We're a completely different breed.

Isaac: We're a relatively small industry and Brighton's a small city so you obviously get to know what's going on around you.

I think the community here is very important, there's a lot of great talent here and getting a stronger community will help us all to flourish.

It's great to hear other Brighton studios are having success; I've lived most my life in the area and am proud of the development here.

Kord: No game development community is close. They are tight-lipped about what they are working on, although they are dying to brag about the smallest things. And no, I couldn't care less.

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A **shore** thing

The Develop Conference and Expo is back. Our essential guide makes sure you won't miss the highlights...

On July 13th the Develop Conference and Expo returns, bigger and better than it's ever been. Over 1,000 developers, business executives and service and tech industry representatives sre set to attend.

The fifth outing for the event, the conference offers the chance to attend numerous sessions and panels, network with industry opinion formers, and attend unmissable the social events.

The first day of the Develop Conference celebrates the success of social and casual games.

The following Wednesday14th and Thursday 15th July brings together the world's most prominant creators of traditional, triple-A and indie games.

Over the next four pages we've gathered all the essentail info about every day, including timings and details for every session and the Expo. Head to **www.developconference.com** for more details. See you there.

KEYNOTES

OPENING KEYNOTE:
Bioware's Dr. Greg Zeschuk and Dr. Ray Muzyka share lessons learned by the Mass Effect studio

THURSDAY KEYNOTE:
Design legend Tim Schafer gives a personal insight into his creative process

TRACK KEYNOTES:

ART: A Journey Through the Pixar Production Pipeline – An overview of overview of Pixar's production pipeline (Andrew Dayton, Technical Director, Pixar Animation Studio)

AUDIO: The Highly Anticipated Sound Revolution – The future of nteractive audio in focus (Adam Levenson, Director, Central Audio and Talent, Activision Publishing)

BUSINESS: Jagex's Indie DNA: How Jagex Did Everything Right by Doing Everything its Own Way – An insight into the unique Jagex ecosystem (Mark Gerhard, CEO, Jagex Games Studio)

DESIGN: The Future IS Controller-Free Games and Entertainment – A look at the future of physical-based gaming, and its inevitable impact on development (George Andreas, Creative Director, Rare)

EVOLVE: Traditional Games Breaking into Social Networks: A View from the Frontline – An analysis of the democratisation of gaming (Louis Castle, CEO, Instant Action)

PRODUCTION: Whodunnit: Bringing Dr Who to a PC Near You – A chance to hear about the handling of an iconic license (Charles Cecil, Revolution; Sean Millard, Creative Evangelist, Sumo Digital; Simon Nelson, Controller, Portfolio & Multi-Platform, BBC Vision; Iain Tweedale, Editor, BBC Wales Interactive)

Tuesday 13th July: One-day conference

Evolve

10:00 - 10:45	**KEYNOTE:** Traditional Games Breaking into Social Networks: A View from the Frontline Louis Castle, CEO, Instant Action		
10:45 - 11:00	**Coffee Break**		
11:00 - 11:45	**Making Free Apps for Fun and Profit:** Adventures in iPhone Game Development for a Triple-A Start-up	5 Things Big Publishers Don't Understand About Small Games	**Shock The System:** Making Meaning AND Money with Indie and Social Impact Games
11:45 - 12:30	**Hats, Loops and Levers:** Inside the Rolando Studio	An Explorer's Guide to Publishing on Facebook and Other Digital Platforms	**Forget Dragon's Den:** What Venture Capital Really Means For You
12:30 - 13:30	**Lunch**		
13:30 - 14:15	**Games As A Service:** Do You Really Know What It Means?	The iPhone Developers' Conference Call	**Unity, Flash and the iPhone::** Happy Bedfellows?
14:15 - 15:00	**Why Mobile Games Will Eventually Outperform Console Gaming:** An Overview of Actual Smartphone Gaming And What's Next	**Flash:** Not just a Flash in the Pan	When Casual Meets Social
14:45 - 15:30	**Coffee Break**		
15:30 - 16:15	An Android Game Post-Mortem	**Round 2:** Get ready for Convergent Gaming	**Yesterday's Games Designers:** Tomorrow's Social Tech Innovators
16:15 - 17:00	**Brand New:** Recreating Call of Duty Zombies on iPhone	Taking Icy Tower to Facebook	How 100 Users Turned into 100 Million - a Browser Game Success Story
17:00 - 17:15	**Break**		
17:15 - 18:00	**KEYNOTE:** Gamification: How Games are Everywhere		

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Wednesday July 14th: Conference

09.00 - 09.30	**Registration**						
09.30 - 10.30	**THURSDAY KEYNOTE:** Creative Game Development: How we do it at BioWare *Dr. Greg Zeschuk, Electronic Arts Vice President, and Co-founder of BioWare, and Dr. Ray Muzyka*						
10.30 - 11.00	**Ed Vaizey Addresses the Conference (followed by Coffee Break)**						
11.00 - 12.00	**KEYNOTE:** *The Future IS Controller-Free Games and Entertainment*	*Dealing with Complexity*	*Artistic Possibilities with Real-Time Lighting*	**Burn Zombie Burn One Year On:** *Marketing, Sales and Making Money*	*User-Generated Content and Social Networking on Xbox LIVE*	**User Research:** *Turning Design Vision into Player Reality*	*Exploring Game Design in Playstation® Home*
12.00 - 13.30	**Lunch**						
13.30 - 14.30	**KEYNOTE:** *Whodunnit: Bringing Dr Who to a PC Near You*	*Homespun Fun - The Art of Kahoots*	*How to Get Great Drama and Performances in Video Games*	**Like You Just Stepped Out of a Salon:** *Real-Time Hair Simulation and Rendering in EyePet*	**.GOV.UK** *What the Industry Needs if Production Tax Credits Can Not be Delivered*	*The Lowdown on Downloadable Content*	*Towards A New Online Publishing Model - Talents, Services and Networks*
14.30 - 15.00	**Break**						
15.00 - 16.00	**KEYNOTE:** *A Journey Through the Pixar Production Pipeline*	**Panel:** *Digital Distribution - The Magic Bullet or Same As It Ever Was?*	*SPU Assisted Rendering*	**The Edge Panel - Character Building:** *Avatars For A User-Generated World*	*Technical Perspectives On The Evolution of SingStar From Game To Service On PlayStation3*	*Budgets - the Bermudan Part of the Production Triangle*	*10 x the Audience for Your PC Games*
16.00 - 16.30	**Break**						
16.30 - 17.30	**Panel:** *The Rise of the Micro Studio*	*Building a Kinect Launch Title from Three Different Perspectives*	Check Conference website	**The Art Direction of Batman:** *Arkham Asylum*	*The Merging of High Performance Computing and Games*	**Working with WiiWare:** *From Student Developers to Swords and Soldiers*	*Producing Valuable Content for PlayStation® Home*
17:00 - 18:00	**Expo Booth Crawl**						
Evening	**Develop Industry Excellence Awards**						

DEVELOP INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS: July 14th

Now in their eighth year, The Develop Awards returns, and is still the only peer-voted awards for the UK and European games industry.

Leading executives, analysts, programmers, producers, artists and musicians will attend this event dedicated to the very best talent across all of Europe.

Companies of all sizes will be battling it out across a range of categories that cover everything from Creativity to Technology, Services and Studios.

Details on the finalists can be found online at **developmag.com/develop-awards**.

The Develop Awards return to the Hilton Metropole Hotel on Wednesday July 14th.

TRACKS KEY

- ART
- AUDIO
- BUSINESS
- CODING
- DESIGN
- EVOLVE
- PRODUCTION
- THE DEN

Thursday July 15th: Conference

10.00 - 11.00	**THURSDAY KEYNOTE:** Successful, Creative, GSOH: Tim 's Personal *Tim Schafer, Founder, Double Fine*					
11.00 - 11.30	**Coffee Break**					
11.30 - 12.30	**KEYNOTE:** *Jagex's Indie DNA: How Jagex Did Everything Right by Doing Everything its Own Way*	**Game Face Story:** *Using a Short Term Prototype for Long Term Gain*	*Putting Rooney through The Mill*	*Addressing Human Scalability with Multi-User Editing*	**Sex, Brawls, and Magic Duels:** *Console Game Design Beyond the Television Screen*	**Sony 3D TV**
12.30 - 13.30	**Lunch**					
13.30 - 14.30	*Using Biometrics to Improve Player Experience*	**Broadcasting Their Intentions:** *TV Tunes into Games*	**Peter Molyneux** *Fable 3*	*Pet Tricks - The Technical Art of EyePet*	*No Fate But What We Make*	*PC Profiling Made Easy with Intel Graphics Performance Analysers*
14.30 - 14.45	**Break**					
14.45 - 15.45	**Rigged to Blow:** *Powerplay Pipeline for SplitSecond*	**Meet the Press:** *How to Make the Games Media Work for You*	*Using Data Analysis on Player Behaviour for Better Decision Making, Iterative Game Design, Exploit Discovery and the Fight Against Real Money Trade*	**Enslaved to the Story:** *When Ninja Theory Met Alex Garland*	*Flushing the Game Toilet - Why, in the Flash Game World, There is No Such Thing as a Bad Idea*	*Special Moves for Winning New Projects*
15.45 - 16.00	**Coffee Break**					
16.00 - 17.00	*Vectors of Performance in Gaming*	**Panel:** *Social and casual gaming and games-based learning*	*Retrofitting a Tools Team to the Total War Franchise*	*Opening Up Player Metrics to the Community in Just Cause 2*	*Why are Games Sequels So Often Better Than Film Sequels and What This Can Teach Us About the Development Cycle*	*Check Conference website*
17.00 - 17.30	**The Develop Den Opinion Jam 2010**					

The Audio Track (runs Thursday, July 15th)

09.30 - 09.40 Introduction for the Audio Day

09.40 - 10.00 High Quality Surround Chat for All

10.10 - 10.50 Source 2.0: What To Do When You Run Out Fresh Material

10.50 - 11.10 Break

11.10 - 11.50 Audio Analysis: The Missing Link

12.00 - 12.40 From Marching Bands to Nightclubs: The Music of Command and Conquer

12.40 - 13.30 Lunch

13.30 - 14.10 The Orchestration Of Anxiety - What Game Audio Can Learn From Psycho

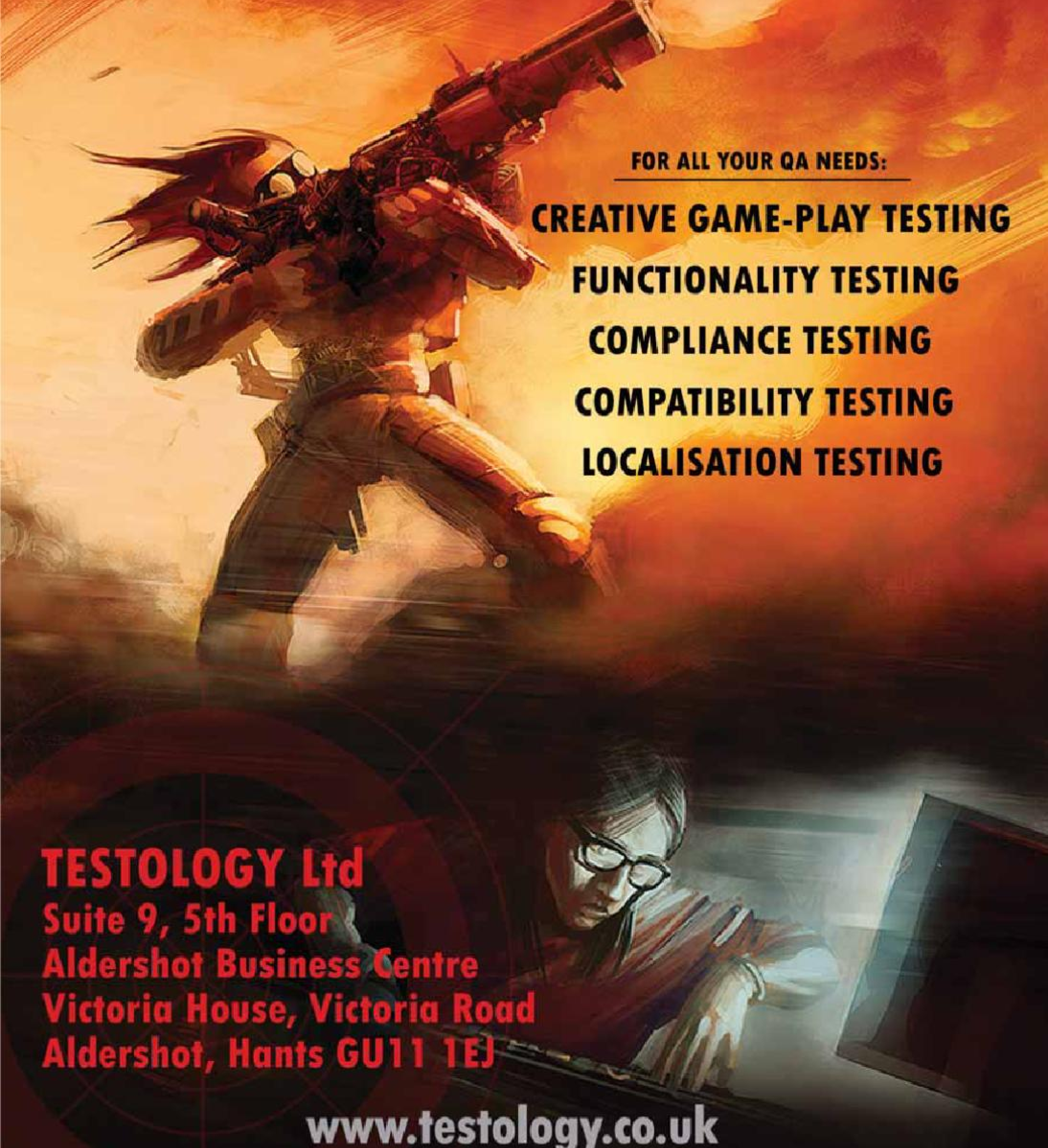
14.20 - 15.00 The Use of Audio as Narrative

15.05 - 15.45 It's All In The Mix - The Importance Of Real-Time Mixing In Video Games

15.45 - 16.00 Coffee Break

16.10 - 16.50 AUDIO KEYNOTE: The Highly Anticipated Sound Revolution

17.00 - 17.40 The 2010 Open Mic Session



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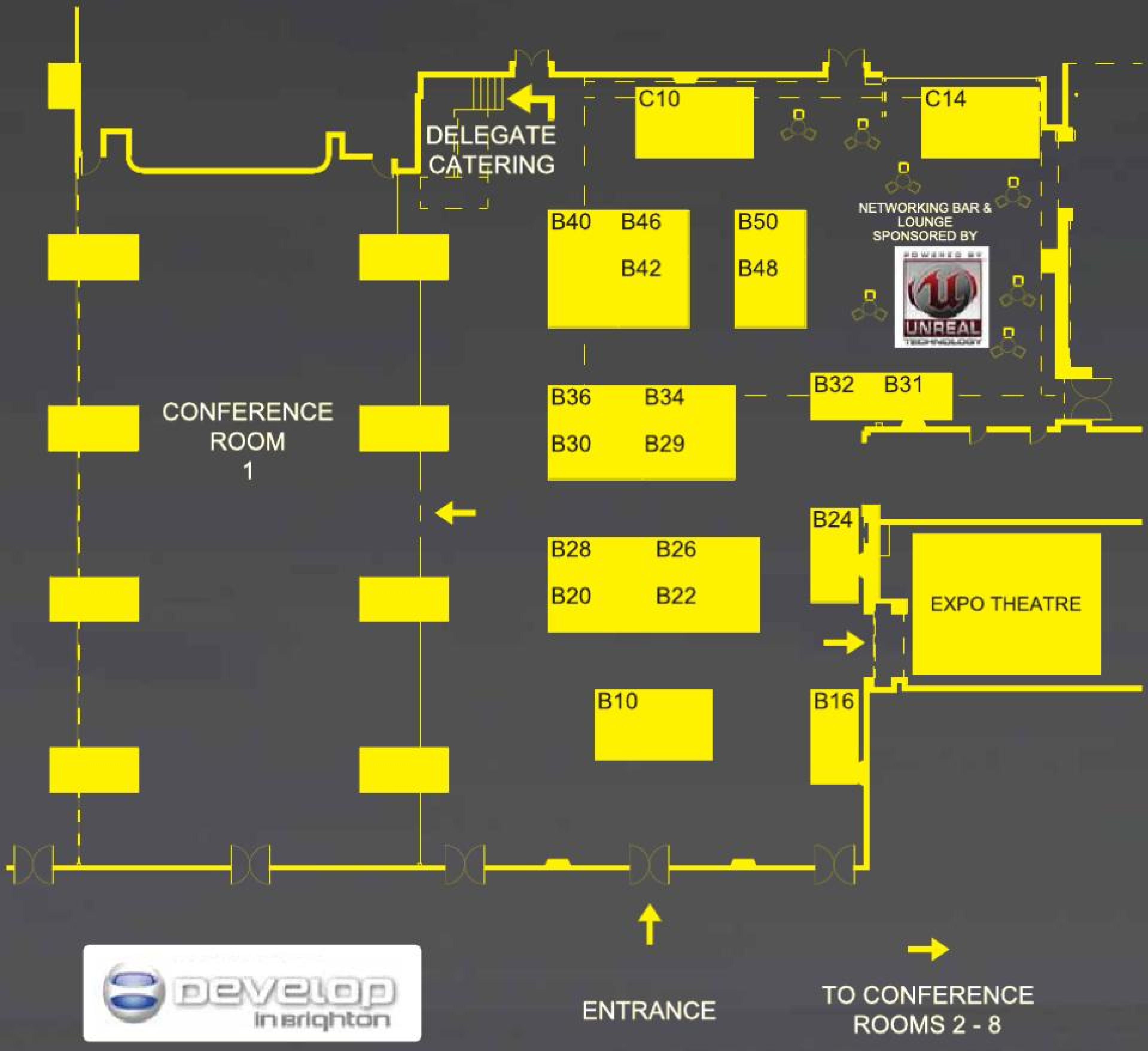
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EXPO: JULY 14th & 15th

Running in parallel with the Conference is the Expo.

The Expo is free for all visitors to attend and brings together some of Europe's most innovative companies from every sector of games development and its supporting industries and services.

At the heart is the Develop Bar & Networking Lounge – sponsored by Unreal Technology – so you don't have to go far to buy colleagues a drink, have an informal meeting or just mix with other visitors.

This year the Conference is offering Expo visitors the chance to attend eight new, work-shop style mini-sessions absolutely free, taking place in the Expo in a specially built seminar theatre.

CBL/The Register Books	**B40**
Codeworks GameHorizon and Gateshead Council	**B26**
Emergent Game Technologies	**B16**
Hansoft	**B48**
IKinema	**B50**
Infernal Engine	**B42**
Jagex	**C14**
Liemur	**B31**
Perforce Software	**B32**
PlayStation Home Platform Group	**C10**
Prism Media Products	**B20**
Scaleform Corporation	**B24**
TechExcel	**B46**
Train2Game	**B10**
University of Abertay Dundee	**B22**

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Search for a Star

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Aardvark Swift would like to thank all the universities and graduates that have taken part in Search for a Star. Well done to the 5 finalists! We look forward to presenting the winner with your Award on July 14th!

Search for a Star is a nationwide competition run in conjunction with Relentless Software. It will highlight the UK's most promising video games developers and also help to bridge the current gap between the needs of developers and UK games degree courses.

For full information please visit www.aswift.com/searchforastar

Nominations for next year's competition will soon be opening, so if you are a course leader it's a great time to start thinking about which of next year's final year students you would like to nominate.

For any questions regarding nominations or to arrange a meeting with one of our consultants at the Develop Conference in Brighton (13th–15th July), please contact Hollie Heraghty via email – hollie@aswift.com – or give her a call on 07515024385.

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Aardvark Swift

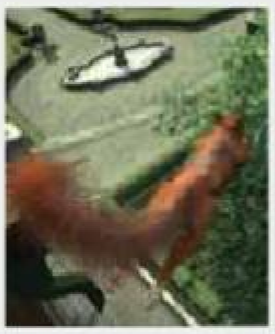
BUILD

THE LATEST TOOLS NEWS, TECH UPDATES & TUTORIALS

HEARD ABOUT: Split/Second's audio director shouts about engine noises, p66

Cohort's Praetorian tech

p54

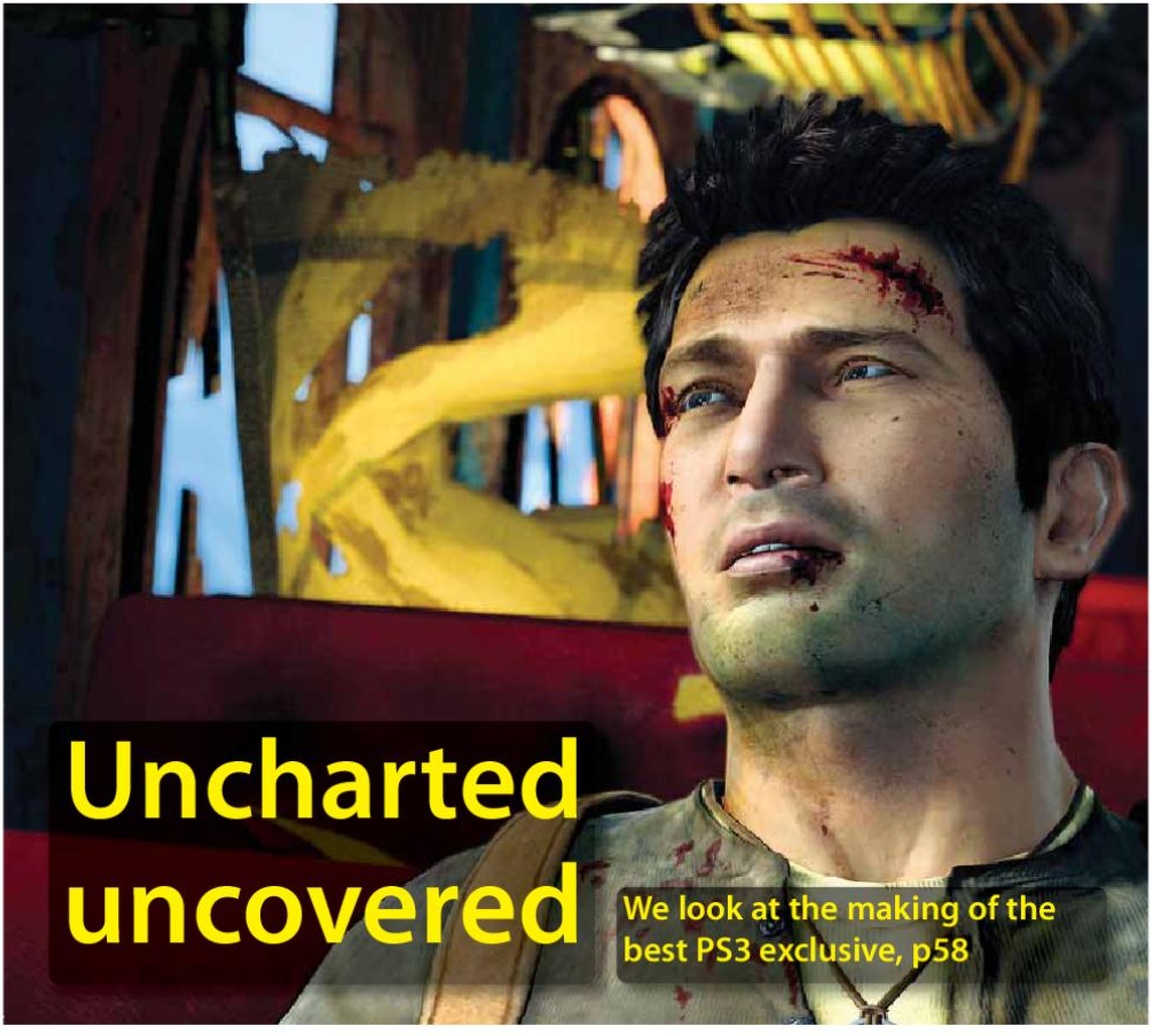


Embedded gaming with Unity

p69

Havok AI under the microscope

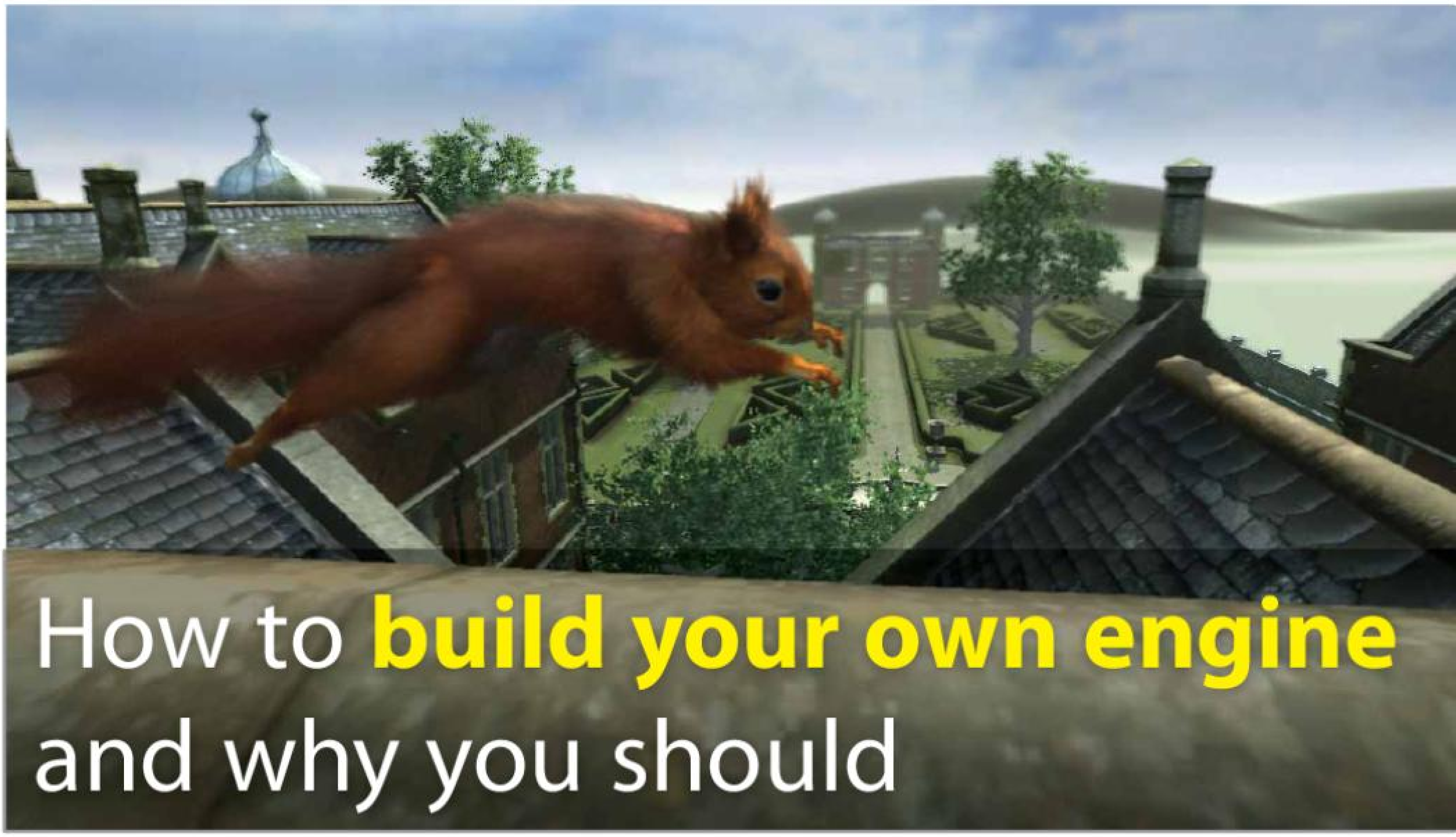
p57



Uncharted uncovered

We look at the making of the best PS3 exclusive, p58

EPIC DIARIES: BLUEHOLE USES UNREAL 3, P64



How to **build your own engine** and why you should

Based in the Scottish game development hotspot of Dundee, we at Cohort Studios pride ourselves on our internally developed game engine, Praetorian Tech. As a fully featured game engine with a range of rendering options and integrated support for middleware solutions, Praetorian represents some four years of continual development and proves that relatively small teams can compete with off-the-shelf products.

As Cohort's head of technology, below I'll go through the story of Praetorian's development, along with the benefits and drawbacks of building your own engine.

Start with a ubiquitous, relatively open platform and then migrate

We began Praetorian on Windows PCs with a three-man team. The initial prototype was built in C++ with Open GL handling the graphics, and our intention from the outset was that the engine should be cross-platform rather than format specific. This meant working at a relatively high level and abstracting away from platform-specific APIs as much as possible.

Below: Praetorian Tech doing its thing with the UK's favourite marginalised rodent

As we knew we'd be working on PlayStation 3 for our main projects, migrating from Open GL to the PS3's native PSGL was an early priority. Getting the first PS3 version going also involved writing some low-level components like memory, controller and I/O management, but on the whole it was a painless affair.

For the base code, we did stumble slightly by relying on heavily templated code within Visual Studio for the Windows prototype, which led to some heavy re-working once we compiled for the PlayStation 3 via GCC. We'd say that it's incredibly sensible to test the code with different compilers nice and early, even if the engine isn't ready to run on other platforms yet.

Integrate into a project as early as possible

Imbedding the engine coders into development teams for our first PlayStation 3 projects was an essential early step. In a small company, engine development has to be focused on practical realities such as feature sets, deliverables and working to project milestones, and this is best achieved by applying ongoing engine development to a specific project.

As we had three PSN titles underway, we had perfect testbeds for Praetorian to grow within. After six months of progress, we'd added FMod for audio and a Collada pipeline to manage graphical assets with an export path for Maya and 3DS Max.

Once up-and-running, refine, refine, refine

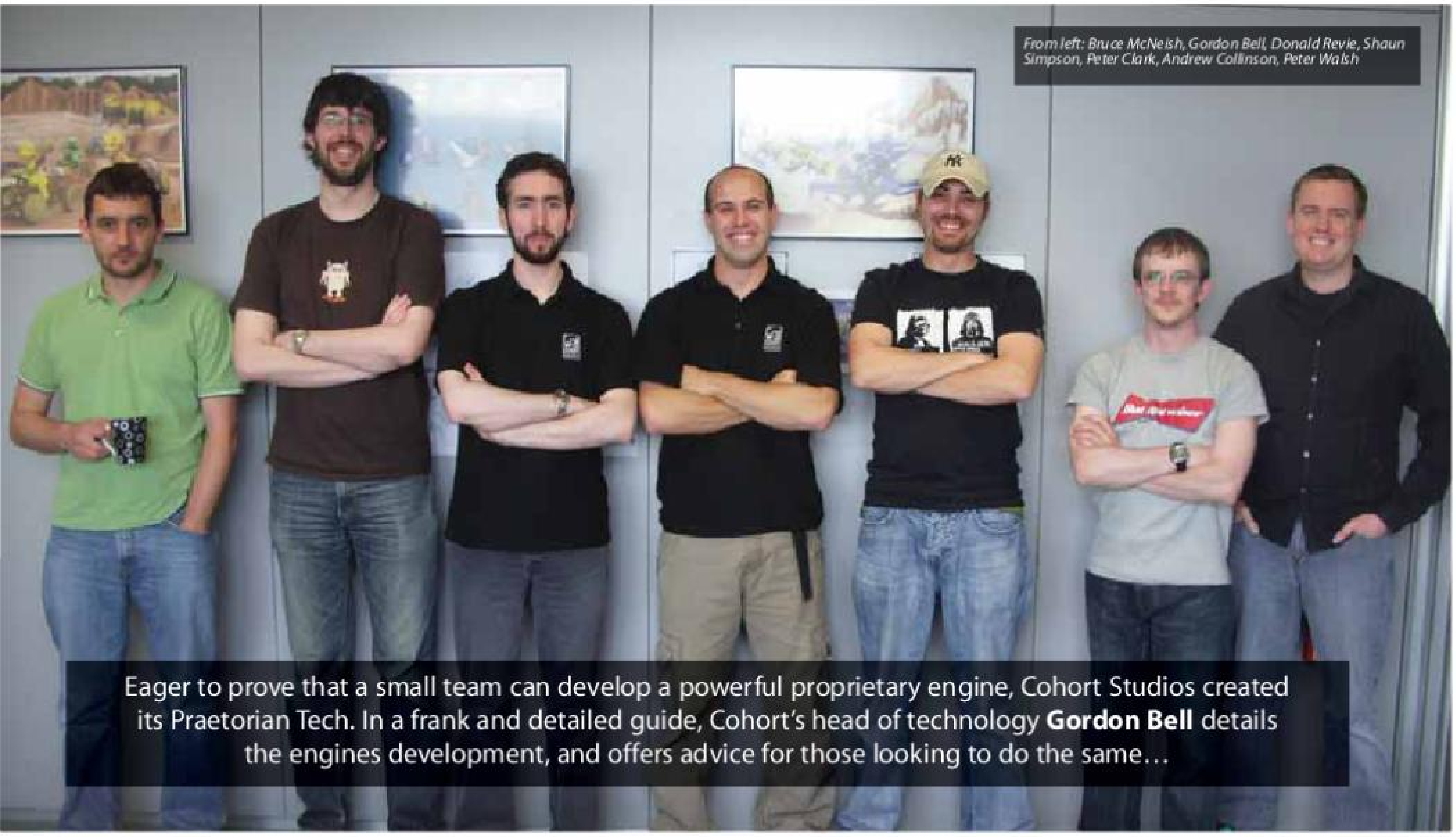
One of the great strengths of owning your own cross-platform engine is being able to fully adapt it to each platform you're working with. About a year ago, we decided to refine Praetorian on the PS3 by switching from PSGL to GCM for our graphics API. By this time, GCM had become something of a standard for high-end work, so we knew we had to make the swap to keep us at the cutting edge, which also gave us some nice optimisation headroom.

Our early decision to abstract out as many APIs as possible paid dividends here, as we only had to work on low-level renderer implementation with no major changes to the rest of Praetorian's codebase, which meant our project teams could carry on working with zero disruption. Interestingly, the addition of an experienced Xbox 360 programmer to the team made the transition to GCM a lot easier, as there are some pleasing and surprising similarities between the GCM and DirectX APIs.

Overall, refining Praetorian on the PS3 via GCM had given us performance boosts for both RSX and Cell work - as high as a 20 per cent improvement in some cases. We also ended up moving from FMod to Sony's native Scream for audio, to really move Praetorian as 'close to the metal' as we can. One other offshoot we were able to look into, thanks again to having abstracted APIs from the start, was an implementation of deferred rendering. We were free to have engine coders experiment with this sort of thing without interfering with our ongoing projects.

Other refinements we made to Praetorian included support for LUA scripting, which is pretty much the standard now, as well as including a physics and dynamics package, which for us meant integrating the Havok suite. Thanks to our great relationship with Havok, we were able to really push this side of the engine.

Both sets of engineers co-operated on ways



From left: Bruce McNeish, Gordon Bell, Donald Revie, Shaun Simpson, Peter Clark, Andrew Collinson, Peter Walsh

Eager to prove that a small team can develop a powerful proprietary engine, Cohort Studios created its Praetorian Tech. In a frank and detailed guide, Cohort's head of technology **Gordon Bell** details the engines development, and offers advice for those looking to do the same…

to improve Praetorian's physics integration and equally, we were able to feed our own suggestions back to improve the Havok API. The results of all this close interaction, and the improvements both parties came up with, can be seen in the high levels of environmental destruction we have running smoothly in *The Shoot*.

Release, Release, Release

The early integration of engine development with projects means that Praetorian has now shipped in three titles for PSN. The benefit here is on the platform holder relations side; Praetorian had passed the SCEE TRCs, giving us a clear road for using it in much bigger future projects, such as *The Shoot*.

We'd say that releasing via smaller titles on digital platforms is the ideal way to trial a new engine, as the smaller the project, the easier it is to iron out those inevitable kinks once your technology comes under the eye of external approvals – not to mention that having a proven engine will give platform holders and customers more faith in your schedules.

The Benefits and the Drawbacks

Building your own engine brings a multitude of unbeatable benefits:

- Deep knowledge: You own the technology and have intimate knowledge of it in terms of its strengths and, just as importantly, its inevitable weaknesses.
- Hardware familiarity: Coding your own engine will, by default, give you a better insight into the hardware you're working with.
- Support: Your tech support is in the building, not on the end of a phone in another time zone, or an unknown user on a forum.
- Flexibility: You can adapt your engine to suit your needs, project requirements and the ever-changing middleware landscape proactively, rather than waiting for your external solution to catch up.
- You won't be caught out by price hikes or being behind on latest versions.
- If you start with a high-level, open-ended mindset, you can specialise with platform-specific APIs as projects demand them, plus you don't have to commit to any single platform. We're now looking at implementing Praetorian on Xbox 360 and bringing the original PC/Open GL iteration up to current Windows/DirectX standards.

> ***One key learning here is to start your tools early – and that the success of your engine is dependent on the tools that the various teams use to interface with it.***

But is also comes with a few drawbacks:

- Being proprietary, newcomers to the coding teams can't hit the ground running with Praetorian as they might with the popular middleware engine solutions.
- The engine needs to be supported with full documentation too. It's great to have an engine team in-house but if core members leave, you need to have some kind of contingency plan in place so work can be picked up.
- You need an ear to the ground when it comes to emerging trends in game development – new middleware solutions, for example – and need to have the ability to adapt your engine to these trends as they become adopted standards.

Above: The Cohort team implemented abstracted APIs from the start, allowing Praetorian Tech to demonstrate superb visual detail

Wisdom and learnings

We're lucky at Cohort to be very close to the University of Abertay, which gives us a great body of eager and talented graduates to bring in. If you can arrange an internship with a well-accredited college running either a game development course or that has a good computer sciences faculty, then take advantage of it to create special project teams.

We needed to design and produce tools to support Praetorian in terms of things like user interface design and so on. We had to assign a dedicated team to create these and, naturally, we underestimated the time required to output sufficient tools with sufficient documentation and tutorials.

One key learning here is to start your tools early – and that the success of your engine is dependent on the tools that the various teams use to interface with it.

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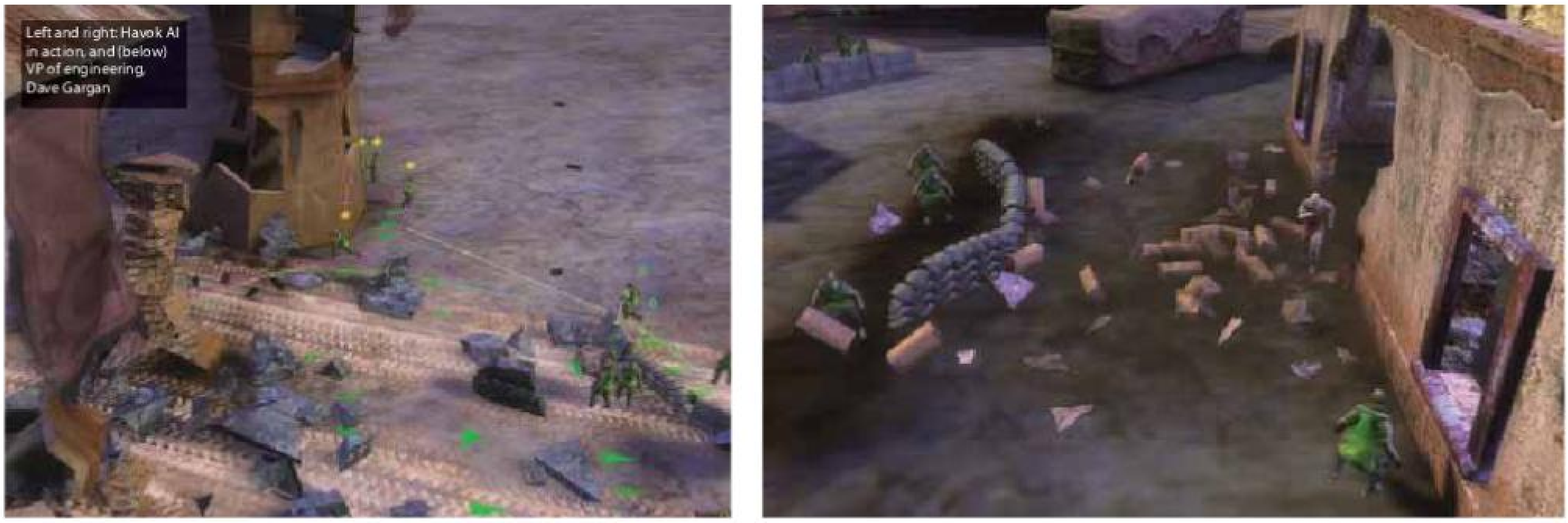
Havok AI

A little over a year after its release, Havok AI is still expanding its reach. **Will Freeman** spoke to the firm's VP of engineering Dave Gargan about why the AI tech has proved so popular…

PRODUCT: Havok AI
DEVELOPER: Havok
PRICE: On request
www.havok.com



Left and right: Havok AI in action, and (below) VP of engineering, Dave Gargan

When it was revealed to the development world at GDC in 2009, Havok AI stood out as a significant boon to its creator's impressive library of middleware solutions. A year on, as it is welcomed by the MMO sector, it is just as relevant as it was at its debut.

Havok's AI tech is defined by the fact that it's been built to allow developers to work with the increasingly dynamic gameworlds that end users have come to expect as the norm; a construction process that started with an industry-changing product from the same stable.

The experience of crafting Havok Physics meant that the company is fortunate to be able to leverage its knowledge of simulation to build a package that deals with any dynamic environment efficiently.

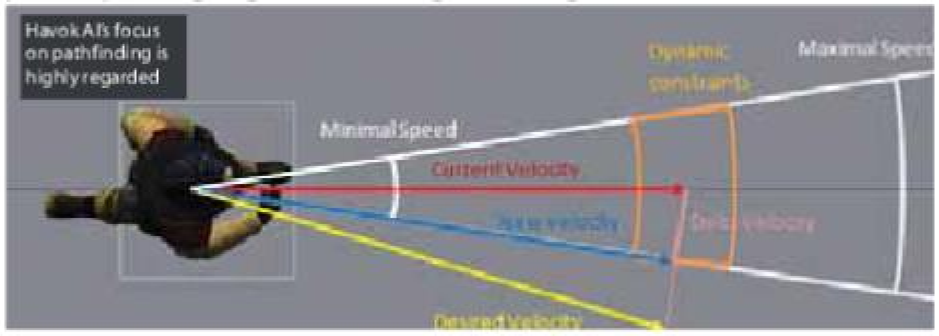
"We noticed that navigation mesh generation was a real bottleneck for several game development pipelines, so we concentrated on building the fastest, most robust automatic navigation mesh generation," explains Havok's VP of engineering, Dave Gargan.

That approach to problem solving identified, Havok then spoke with several developers as part of its initial product planning stage, and one thing became immediately apparent – AI in games is extremely diverse and too genre specific to lend itself well to middleware. For that reason, Havok AI focuses exclusively on pathfinding and pathfollowing on navigation meshes.

> ***We remove the need to reinvent solutions for the lowest level AI problems which leaves developers time to focus on the unique parts of their AI systems.***

"We remove the need to reinvent solutions for some of the very lowest level AI problems which leaves developers with time to focus on the unique and game specific parts of their AI systems," reveals Gargan.

Thanks to a well rehearsed ability to respond to industry trends, Havok has enjoyed significant gains in the field, with MMO builders flocking to the AI offering *(see Bold new worlds)*.



Havok AI's focus on pathfinding is highly regarded

"Game worlds are getting larger," says Gargan. "We're seeing more server based titles. Memory and CPU costs are just as important on these titles as they are on console. We're continuing to push CPU and memory performance."

Despite the AI market's growth, Havok sees the area as one in a fledging state; a frank view that gives organisations space to evolve their offering.

Gargan: "We can mostly agree on a spatial representation that can solve the problem of moving a cylinder from one point on a level to another. This is the first step in solving the locomotion problem. As our NPCs become more capable, we need to extend solutions into the animation space."

What allows those pushing Havok AI to tease the outside of the envelope is the same breadth of experience that was so critical to the tech's conception. Time spent producing physics, animation or rendering middleware gave the architects the chance to learn common challenges to all tool building.

The Havok team strives to keep those producing content as productive as possible, and tries to provide a fast runtime that imposes few constraints.

"For Havok AI that translates to a fast robust navigation mesh generation algorithm that builds memory efficient navigation meshes and a cross platform runtime that is efficient even in highly dynamic environments," states Gargan.

And so we conclude where we began, with dynamic environments; something evermore prevalent that *Havok AI* is poised to enhance.

Bold new worlds

Time and again MMO developers are choosing to use Havok AI for pathfinding and pathfollowing on navigation meshes. The reason for that is twofold, suggests Gargan: "I think there are two real motives. The product handles large environments well. We have had streaming and stitching support from day one.

"Secondly, when someone is building an MMO they know they are making a technology choice that has to last for five-to-ten years; typically much longer than a traditional development cycle. In those situations they need to be guaranteed that the technology on which they are relying will be continuously updated and well supported over that time. Havok has a proven reputation here."

With the MMO genre continuing to diversify with regards to both theme and target demographic, online realms show no sign of stopping, meaning there's every chance things can only get better for Havok AI, and subsequently, its users.

NAUGHTY DOG CINEMATICS TEAM
Josh Scherr - Cinematics Animation Lead
Eric Baldwin - Facial Animation Lead
Taylor Kurosaki - Editor

ANIMATORS
Kion Phillips, Troy Slough, Marianne Hayden, Jason Martinsen, Jeremy Collins

ADDITIONAL ANIMATION
Sony Computer Entertainment America,
Visual Arts Services Group,
San Diego Technicolor Interactive Services

MOTION CAPTURE DIRECTOR
Gordon Hunt

PRINCIPAL CAST
Nolan North, Claudia Black, Emily Rose, Richard McGonagle, Steve Valentine, Graham McTavish, René Auberjonois, Robin Atkin Downes, Pema Dhondup, Greg Myhre

Cinematics

Naughty Dog's creative director **Amy Hennig** talks us through the making of Uncharted 2's cinematics…

BECAUSE WE'RE TELLING A CHARACTER-driven story, capturing the emotional authenticity of the actors' performance is key. Everything we do, all the processes we've developed, are geared to this one goal. It all begins with the story and writing, of course, but after that our primary and most critical hurdle is casting.

We cast *Uncharted* as though we were casting for film or TV—including in-person auditions, and callbacks where we have the principal characters read with Nolan North, our lead. It's important that we not only find talented actors for the roles, but the chemistry has to be right. It's also critical for us to assess the actors' physical signatures, because they provide the entire performance for their characters—including both motion-capture and dialogue recording.

Unlike most other game developers, we have the actors performing together on the mocap stage, so it's really much more like a theatrical or on-camera performance in that way; it's sort of like going back to the actors' roots and doing 'black box theater'. We're also recording the actors' vocal performance at the same time, because we mocap the scenes on a sound stage, and we have the actors mic'ed for sound. Even when we're recording in-game audio in the voice studio, we have the actors performing together whenever possible. Any actor will tell you that acting is reacting—so it's ironic that in most game productions, the actors are performing alone in the recording studio without any real context, and without the other actors to play off of. That's why we've developed the production methods we use—having the actors on the stage together allows them to capture those 'lightning in a bottle' creative moments, which give their performances such a natural quality, and so much emotional

The cinematics of UNCHARTED 2

In this exclusive extract from Ballistic's The Art of Uncharted 2: Among Thieves we go behind the scenes to see how **Naughty Dog** made the cinematic sequences in one of this generation's most dramatic games…

authenticity. We're able to capture every little stumble and overlap, every interruption and ad-lib that brings the characters to life.

We also include the actors as long-term collaborators on the project—we work together for more than a year, we revise and table-read and rehearse the material together before we capture it, and we allow for a lot of collaborative improvisation on shoot days.

Capturing the cinematics for *Uncharted* is more like shooting an on-camera production than a video game. It's like shooting a multi-camera TV show, because the actors perform entire scenes in a single take—we don't have to break the scenes down into shots because the mocap cameras record the entire performance from all angles simultaneously. All the camera staging and editing happens later, in Maya, when we get the mocap data back and the animators get to work.

We'll only break a scene into multiple shots if the size of the mocap stage can't accommodate the entire scene, or if we need to break down the set for some reason. Otherwise, we just let the actors run the scene all the way through. We'll usually do several takes, just to make sure have enough choices when we get to the editing process, and to allow for some alternate readings and improvisations. The actors really enjoy the process, because it takes them back to the roots of their craft. We also like to work fast and keep things moving, so there's not a lot of waiting-around time. And it's a pretty forgiving medium, since we can easily cut together different audio and mocap takes to fix any problems, more so than we'd be able to do if we were shooting for film or TV.

Ultimately, we carry the Naughty Dog philosophy into the mocap studio—which is a check-your-ego-at-the-door, no BS, collaborative working environment which the actors enjoy. There's a lot of camaraderie, and it's a very relaxed set, not a lot of tension—all of which shows, I think, in the end result.

'Last Year's Model', where Drake and Chloe meet Elena and Jeff, was not only one of my favorite scenes in the game, but one of the hardest to produce.

The first challenge was choosing the mocap data, which was culled from many different takes for each actor. The camerawork also proved tricky, as the actors were often walking around and crossing the camera plane.

The animators had their work cut out for them as well. There was lots of physical contact between the characters, lots of prop animation, and some of the most demanding facial animation in the whole game. Chloe in particular was a challenge in this regard, as she had to cycle through a wide range of emotions.

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Motion Capture

Cinematic Animation Lead **Josh Scherr** talks us through the motion capture process for Uncharted 2…

WE APPROACH MOTION CAPTURE quite differently than most studios. While we do extensive planning prior to the shoot, we don't do storyboards. We discovered early on that planning out all the shots ahead of time was not only unnecessary, but didn't allow for all the spontaneous discoveries (and inevitable changes) that happen during rehearsal and shooting.

We'll sometimes do rough camera blocking for scenes with elaborate setups or a lot of characters. We spend most of our prep time measuring our game environments to make simple physical sets, coming up with rough staging, and making props. On the day of the shoot, my job is to make sure the animators get everything they need to create the best possible performance. Getting video footage is absolutely vital. Not only does it help me pick the best performances from each actor, it provides the animators with essential reference. We don't do any facial mocap—all of the faces are animated via keyframing—so three of our four cameras focus on the actor's faces, and the fourth camera acts as a master overview of the scene. I also try to make sure the actors don't make any performance choices that won't read well once applied to their characters. After the shoot, I review the best takes and choose what mocap I want to use. Since there's rarely a completely perfect take, I usually mix and match the best takes from each actor to make the final scene. Once we receive the data, the real work begins. We don't just take the raw mocap, drop it into the game, and call it done. Everything is carefully edited, modified, and polished.

The Art of Uncharted 2 is a 272-page book showcases the amazing unseen art and ideas that helped make Uncharted 2: Among Thieves one of the most universally and critically acclaimed games ever created. From concept art, to character studies, environment art, character modeling, game art, cinematics, motion-capture, animation, and effects.
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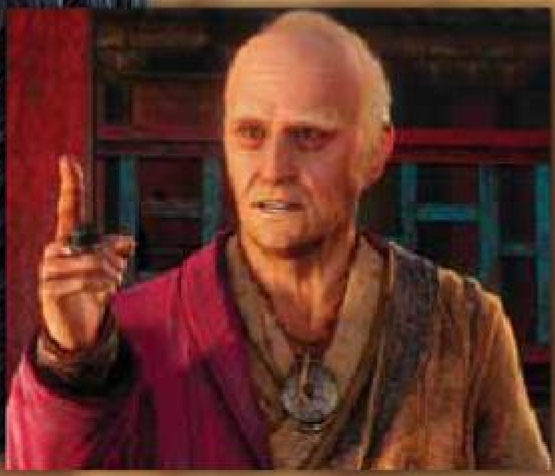

Animations

Cinematic Animation Lead **Josh Scherr** talks us through the animation process for Uncharted 2's cinematics…

OUR ANIMATION PROCESS BEGINS with scene layout and camera animation. Seeing the data in Maya is like watching the actors from a god's eye perspective, so we'll just go in and start exploring the possibilities. For the simple scenes, we'll often just animate a single camera or use free software called zooShots that lets you place multiple cameras and create an edit decision list. For the more complex scenes, we'll work with our video/audio editor Taylor Kurosaki and provide him with a series of cameras that provide coverage of a given scene, then let him turn it into a cohesive whole.

Once the animators receive their scenes, they first do a general clean-up pass on the mocap data to get rid of any unwanted pops or weirdness. Feet and hands are locked down, fingers are animated, props are constrained to the characters, and animated where necessary.

Since mocap can often look floaty or stiff in the broader gestures, the animators will loosen up the arms in a walk, punch up arm gestures so they have more snap, and tone down excessive bouncing or fidgeting. We make sure any physical contact between characters looks good and has the proper weight. Lastly, if we don't get the performance we're looking for, animators will use the mocap as a base and then go in and do some keyframe animation.

Given our time constraints, we only do this when absolutely necessary. Having said that, all of the dangerous stunts are always keyframeanimated. Keyframing the facial animation from scratch requires a lot of time and care to get right. While we can let little issues in the body animation slip by, you'll know right away if something's wrong with the face, so it becomes the priority when time is short.

Rather than absolute realism, we strive for a 'stylised realism.' We push the character's facial expressions just enough so their faces don't seem stiff or dead, but not so far that they look cartoony or grotesque. The video reference is not used to rotoscope the faces, but rather reinterpret the performances. Eric Baldwin, our lead facial animator, ensures that the faces look consistent between each scene and each animator. At its peak, the cinematics team had 32 animators who produced 90 minutes of highly polished animation in less than a year. Each animator was responsible for 12-15 seconds of finished animation per week, including the body, face, eyes, props, vehicles, and whatever other elements might be in a scene.

Naughty Dog's goal with *Uncharted 2* was to create an 'active cinematic experience,' which partially meant taking control away from the player as little as possible. The collapsing building in Nepal, the convoy chase, and helping Jeff get to safety are all moments that might've been cinematics in other games.

However, we made them fully interactive and they were all the more immersive and awesome for it. So when we do take control away, it had better be for a good reason. Cinematics in *Uncharted 2* are used not only to tell the story and showcase our characters, but also to create moments that are difficult (if not downright impossible) to provide when the player is jumping off cliffs or trying to shoot bad guys. Globe-hopping transitions, intimate character moments, and subtle emotions are much easier to convey—and more effective—when the player isn't in control of Drake.

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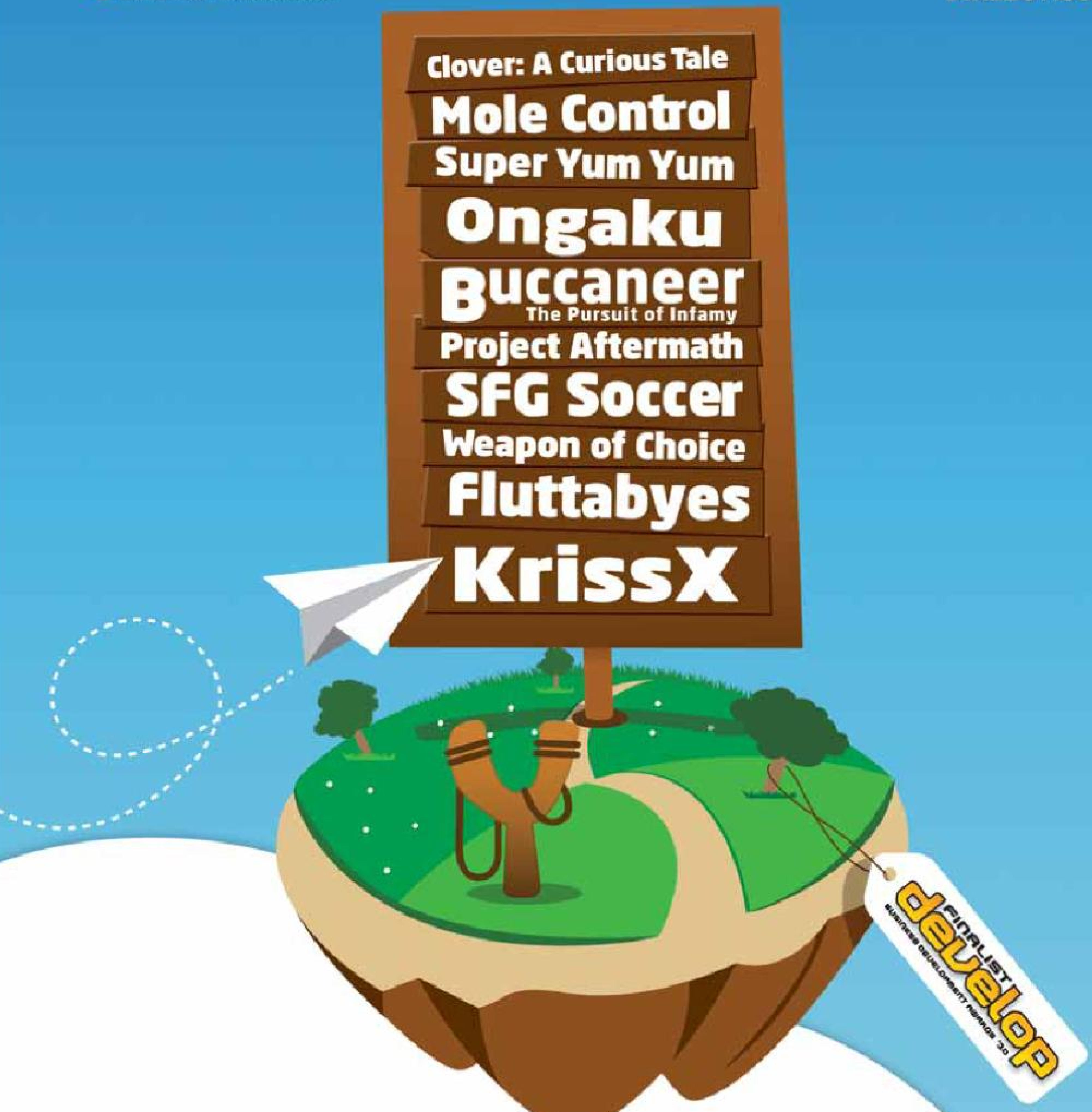
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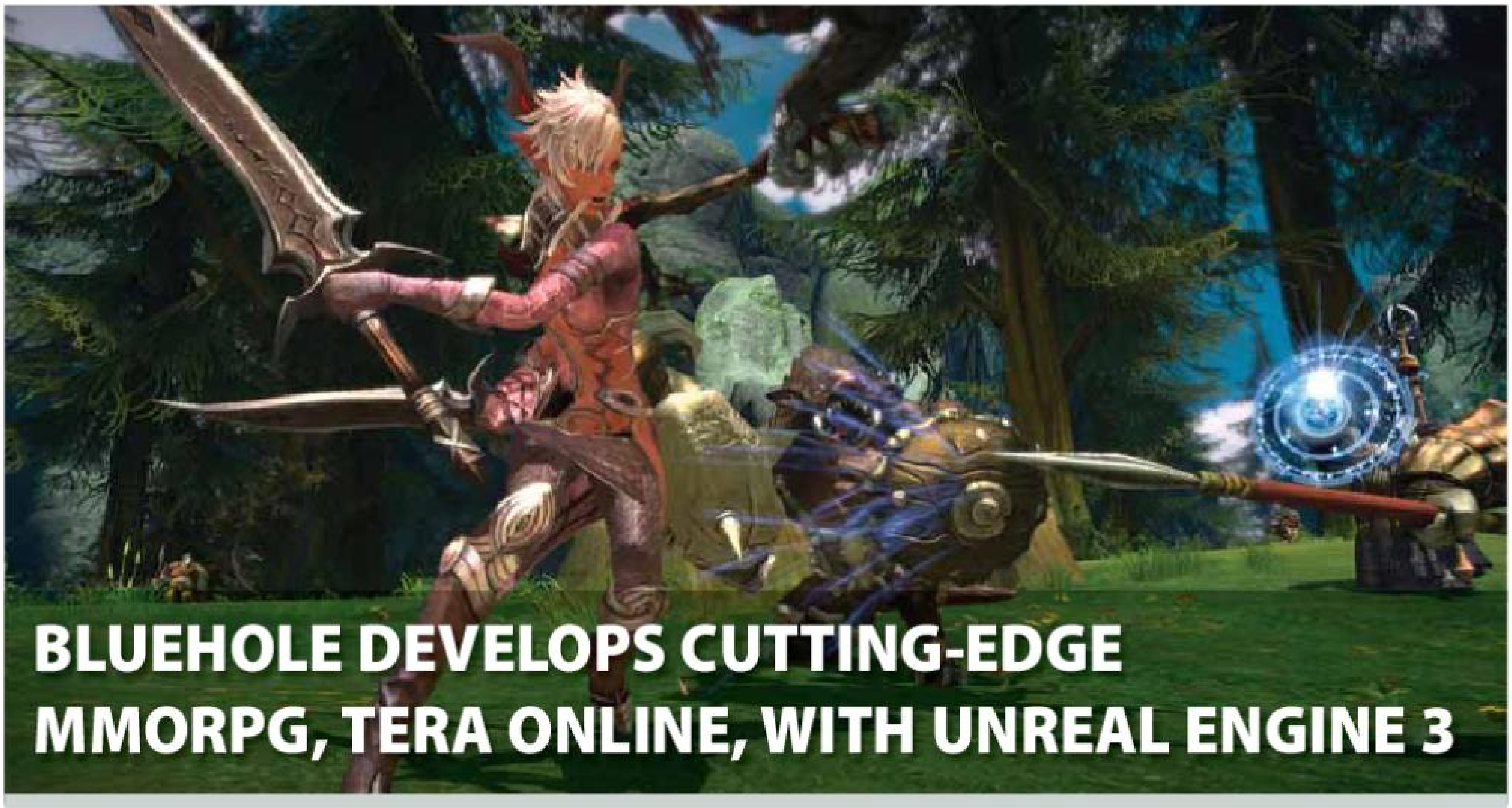
BLUEHOLE DEVELOPS CUTTING-EDGE MMORPG, TERA ONLINE, WITH UNREAL ENGINE 3



Above: Bluehole's new online role-player game, Tera Online: The Exiled Realm of Arborea, was created using Unreal Engine 3

The latest highly anticipated, massive multiplayer online role-playing game emerging from Seoul is the fantasy epic, *Tera Online: The Exiled Realm of Arborea*.

Developed by a team of 180 at Bluehole Studio, *Tera Online* stands out from the crowded MMORPG space thanks to its use of Unreal Engine 3 technology as well as the creative force behind this original game.

Bluehole Studio was formed in March 2007 by serial entrepreneur Byung-Gyu Chang and the producer, lead game designer, lead programmer and art director of NCsoft's *Lineage II*, which also used Unreal Engine technology.

"Unreal Engine 3 is an excellent engine that a large majority of our developers had experience with through previous games," said Sung-joong Lew, lead client programmer at Bluehole Studio.

"The Unreal Engine provides essential features like rendering expression and performance, as well as a variety of high-productivity development tools. In addition, the technology's expandability is excellent. One of the engine's strong points is that features implemented during the development of *Unreal Tournament 3* and *Gears of War 2* have been automatically applied to Unreal Engine 3, allowing developers direct access to Epic's latest technology."

Bluehole's technical art director Shin-hyoung Im said his team utilised Unreal Kismet and Unreal Matinee to create the game's opening cinematics.

"We did our best to express the feel of character skins and various materials used in real costumes by utilising features such as diffuse, normal, specular and specular power provided by the Unreal Engine's standard phong shader," Im added. "We tuned up the phong shader a little bit to make it express unique colour impressions for *Tera Online*."

Like many MMORPGs, *Tera Online* will tap into the creative power of its players. Every playable character can be completely customised to take advantage of Unreal Engine 3 visuals.

"Unreal Engine 3 allowed our technology artists to edit materials freely so that various visual looks could be produced," said Lew.

Similar to the deep and intuitive customisation of today's best MMORPGs, *Tera Online* players can select face, hair, voice, clothing, weapons, gear and other options for each race. Additional features like skin color, hair color, tattoos, accessories and other cosmetic modifications are provided through material parameter adjustments.

Unreal Engine 3's modularisation helped Bluehole add features needed for combat elements without difficulties. Im said that the engine's well-formed development tools allowed the team to easily leverage additional resources as well.

Bluehole said it's been able to get the most out of Unreal Engine 3 technology thanks o the past experience of key team members, as well as help through the Unreal Development Network (UDN) and Epic Games Korea.

While *Tera Online* was created over the past three years in Seoul, the game was designed for the global MMORPG market from the outset, which was one of the reasons Unreal Engine 3 was used

"The Korean MMO market is very competitive," said Harns Kim, associate producer. "The market anticipates emerging killer titles, with a focus on not just a few new elements but the overall quality of the games. We are developing *Tera Online* to the level where every such need is satisfied. From the early stage of development, we have targeted a global market for this new flagship franchise."

Tera Online is the latest game to watch in a growing list of top-tier MMORPGs that run on UE3 technology.

UPCOMING EPIC ATTENDED EVENTS:

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Brighton, UK: July 13th to 15th, 2010

San Diego Comic-Con
San Diego, CA: July 22nd to 25th, 2010

GDC Europe
Cologne, Germany: August 16th to 18th, 2010

Gamescom
Cologne, Germany: August 18th to 22nd, 2010

Please email: mrein@epicgames.com for appointments.

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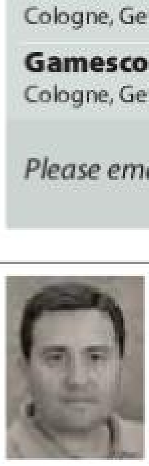

Mark Rein is vice president of Epic Games based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Since 1992 Mark has worked on Epic's licensing and publishing deals, business development, public relations, academic relations, marketing and business operations.
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HEARDABOUT

Split/Second

John Broomhall talks to Split/Second's audio director Steve Emney and audio programmer Andy Hutchings about avoiding the 'audio overload' typical of the racing genre...

THIS MONTH'S FEATURED SOUNDTRACK:
Split/Second

DEVELOPER:
Black Rock Studio/Disney Interactive Studios

AUDIO TEAM:
Audio director: Steve Emney
Principal Audio Designer: Steve Rockett
Sound Design: Erasmus Talbot, Dom Smart, Jeremy Mayne
Original Music: Nimrod Productions, Steve Emney, Erasmus Talbot
Dialogue direction: Nick Baynes, Steve Emney
Audio Programming: Andy Hutchings, Jim Knowler, Anastasios Brakis, Ciaran Rooney

The high octane, high stakes and high drama *Split/Second*, is a riotous, explosive, adrenaline-pumping racing game. You can tactically deploy powerplays to trigger jaw-droppingly impressive environmental events and effects – while knobbling your opponents progress to boot, gaining precious seconds of lap time and even opening up new routes.

All well and good – and clearly rich pickings for an audio team with both excellent pedigree and a hunger to push the envelope. Right from the outset, however, Steve Emney and Andy Hutchings knew they faced the danger of racing game audio overload. Given the sheer saturation of sound events involved – not to mention numerous car engines and Nimrod's kick-ass music score – getting the mix right was a big challenge. Its anti-cacophony strategy entailed a close, harmonious working relationship and shared vision between coding and sound design, the like of which racing game veteran Emney hasn't previously encountered.

Emney: "We worked in the same room and found joint solutions throughout the production. With these kind of full-on soundscapes, it can be very difficult to arrive at a decent mix. You want to feed back to the player exactly what you feel they want to hear and obviously you've got music and engines fighting to occupy the same frequency space – you have to address that somehow."

Hutchings continues: "That's right – so we use FFT tech to continually analyse the frequencies coming out from both the music and the player's engine sub-mix to see where there are competing strong frequencies. We then limit those frequencies in the music, allowing the player to have mix space without decreasing overall volume, using a real-time 356 band in-line equaliser."

Emney: "*Split/Second* features scenery crashing and massive explosions – for instance, a jumbo jet might land next to you or an entire skyscraper could fall straight ahead – all brilliant opportunities for sound drama. We wanted to find ways of using sound and tech – imagine the car you're driving has a set of ears – we wanted those ears to be what the player would hear – not everything, but just the important things to make a coherent, comprehensible listening experience."

The result is a self-governing mix methodology with smart embedding of mixer events throughout the scenery, that will respond based on specific rules – for example, proximity, line of sight and game state.

> ***"We wanted to find ways of using sound and tech – imagine the car you're driving has a set of ears – we wanted those ears to be what the player would hear."***
>
> Steve Emney, Black Rock Studio

Hutchings: "A big win is that we split the entire audio content into sub-mixes enabling control of each component. For instance, you could be close to a big explosion and actually, unknowingly, trigger mix events that will duck other sounds to make space for an exaggerated explosive sound effect – we change both volume and high/low pass filters by the way; the game knows you are in the right place at the right time and orientated correctly to make that big audio moment happen appropriately. However, if the same powerplay explosion triggers somewhere down the track, we won't focus the mix on that – it's more appropriate to hear the screaming car sounds immediately around you."

With real-time DSP – such as hardcore flanging for good measure, the game delivers an exciting, vibrant, varied and brilliantly dramatic audio experience.

Meanwhile, 'interactive music' rules control a stylistically, immediately identifable music score comprised of various long length loops defined to allow a complex playlist approach with cuts on the beat, again triggered by the embedded mixer events as well as a number of other game conditions.

Also created during the two-year development was a sophisticated granular audio tool Tonic, which analyses RPM sweeps of the engine from min to max and back to idle, to define a database of engine grain cycles which the audio engine stitches together at runtime to match the driving performance.

Having the systems established and content implemented, Emney and Hutchings worked on tweaking the audio via a bespoke PC app that provides a visual picture and live update in-game of the thousands of 'nodes' and 'sliders' that represent the mix options, even hooking up the game to a hardware control surface to lovingly handcraft each and every powerplay mini-mix.

All members of the audio team contributed their suggestions on the mix underlining the collaborative team effort that has facilitated such a tour-de-force.

Above: Split/Second's experienced audio director Steve Emney

John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider
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UNITYFOCUS

Making the switch to the web

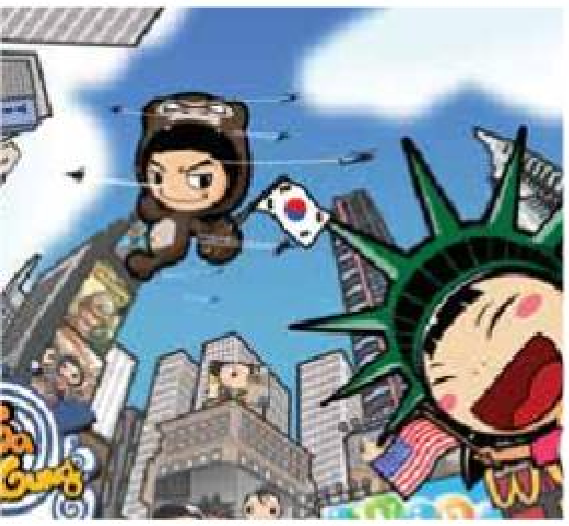
As Unity continues to expand its global reach, **Thomas Grové** talks to Korean games maker GPM Studio about switching to the ever popular development solution…

The Korean game market is known for its downloadable PC games, but Korean game developers are increasingly adopting Unity to take advantage of browser embedded gaming and streaming content.

The first well known example of this was when the developers of the Cartoon Network MMO *Fusion Fall* decided to change gears mid production and drop Gamebryo after user testing revealed that the large download was a major barrier for its target audience.

Nurien Software, creators of the stylish dance party and social networking online game *MStar*, also decided to make the switch — converting its *Unreal 3* game to Unity for its upcoming launch in key international markets.

The most recent Korean dev team to finish converting its game was GPM Studio, who made the decision to adopt Unity studio wide for all current and upcoming projects. I recently met with its CEO to find out more.



INTERVIEW: LUKE PARK, CEO, GPM STUDIO

What made you decide to start GPMStudio?
I've always wanted to develop my own games with new content and concepts, so after I had been in the game industry for a few years I decided to open GPM.

Can you tell me about the history of Gga Ggung's development?
We started to develop GG in 2007 with the open source Ogre engine. The biggest disadvantage of using Ogre was that it is not established and hard to find developers who can develop with it. In 2008 we changed to the Gamebryo engine, which is the most popular engine in Korea, so it was easy to find developers who have a lot of experience with it — but it has many disadvantages, too.

We used it for a year and a half before it became apparent that Gamebryo wasn't going to work out. Luckily we found out about the Unity engine from the GPM Community Site; after a week of investigation I could tell that there was a new world of hope for GG.

How long did it take to convert Gga Ggung from Gamebryo to Unity?
It took us four months, and in that time we were able to add new features, too. In the end, I don't think it really increased our production time at all.

What are some of the benefits of using Unity versus other engines?
The licensing costs, multi-platform deployment, it's easy to learn, and you can create the same gameplay features as you can in other engines with ten-to-20 per cent of the code.

As for the game itself, our users benefit by not having to download graphics card drivers or Active X, and Unity's web player penetration and streaming capabilities means there's no need for a lengthy install process.

What was the hardest part about converting your project to Unity?
When we started, the manual wasn't in Korean, and we couldn't find much information about developing with Unity on Korean forums either. So, using Unity's English website was the most difficult part. Because of this, we started to translate the documentation into Korean and also used our know-how to open www.unity3dkorea.com for developers in Korea.

What's your favourite part about using Unity?
From a management perspective, my favourite part is that it makes the process of making games fun for our developers. Because of Unity's ease of use, all of our developers are able to participate in discussing the engine and making the game, not just the programmers, which is normally the case in South Korea.

What's unique about Gga Ggung? Why do you think it will be successful?
First of all, our theme of 'hide and seek' is easy to understand and appeals to a global audience. When you combine this with the fact that we're able to put such a high quality multiplayer game on the web, it really opens up our market potential.

GG's website and in-game lobby system also allows GG to grow an organic game community; this is very powerful as it can help the popularity of the game for a long time.

Furthermore, because of GG's family-friendly nature, it appeals to a lot more female users than the average game in Korea. Finally, our character customisation opens up the potential to do various marketing things like expose new fashion brands.

You have two other announced Unity games (TalkTing and Bible Online), is there anything you'd like to share about those projects?
TalkTing is in the visual novel genre which is very popular in the Asian market, especially in Japan. It's a game where people create their own love-story and make a profit by sharing their user generated content with others.

Bible Online is the huge project. There are a lot of developers who have developed a game with a Bible concept but they didn't really succeed because they just made a game with Bible content. *Bible Online* is not a game; it's more of a visualised Bible made with game technology which we hope will appeal to both Christians and non-Christians. I totally think that people will be interacting with this visualised Bible on tablets, instead of reading a physical Bible, but it's going to need a lot of people's interest and investment to complete.

What regions are you targeting for your games? Are you considering any platforms other than Web?
All the games from GPM contain global contents, so the world is our target market. After the web, we're planning on targeting mobile platforms like the iPad and then consoles like the Nintendo Wii.

Do you have any advice for smaller developers to get their games noticed?
The most difficult thing will be funding projects and finding experienced, skilled developers. Developers need to find new contents and share a vision with others. Creating new contents and opening new markets is the only way to become a global business. Just don't give up; challenge.

Do you see any changes happening in development trends in Korea?
Most of the games have been downloadable and service based online games. We ignored web browser based games in the past, because they were simple, small and light games.

However, Unity's impressive 3D Web capabilities are beginning to catch the attention of Korean developers. The interest in web-based games is growing and there is a range of support from the government to help Korean companies become global.

Do you think there are barriers between Asian and Western gaming?
I think that in the Asian market, developers think more about business and making a profit from games rather than giving fun and joy to people. This mindset is different between the two.

Anything else you'd like to say?
Korea is a small country, but the best country of IT and semi-conductor technologies in the world. GPM Studio is a game developer in Korea with young professionals who love challenges.

We know what it is to enjoy games. With the support of our users, and the developer community, we aspire to become a global company that can change the world.

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New Platforms. New Technologies. New Markets

Traditional Games Breaking into Social Networks: A View from the Frontline
Louis Castle – CEO, Instant Action Inc.

KEYNOTE

"I have been attempting to free the games industry from the shackles of bricks and mortar and democratizing music games in the process. I'm looking forward to sharing my experiences at Evolve."

Gamification: How Games are Everywhere
David Helgason – CEO, Unity Technologies

KEYNOTE

"I'll be talking about how games are everywhere and, more importantly, how we can use them to conquer untapped markets. I'm looking forward to coming to Evolve and sharing some of the discoveries we've made with Unity."

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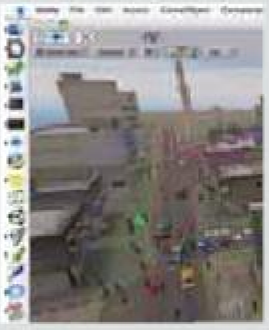

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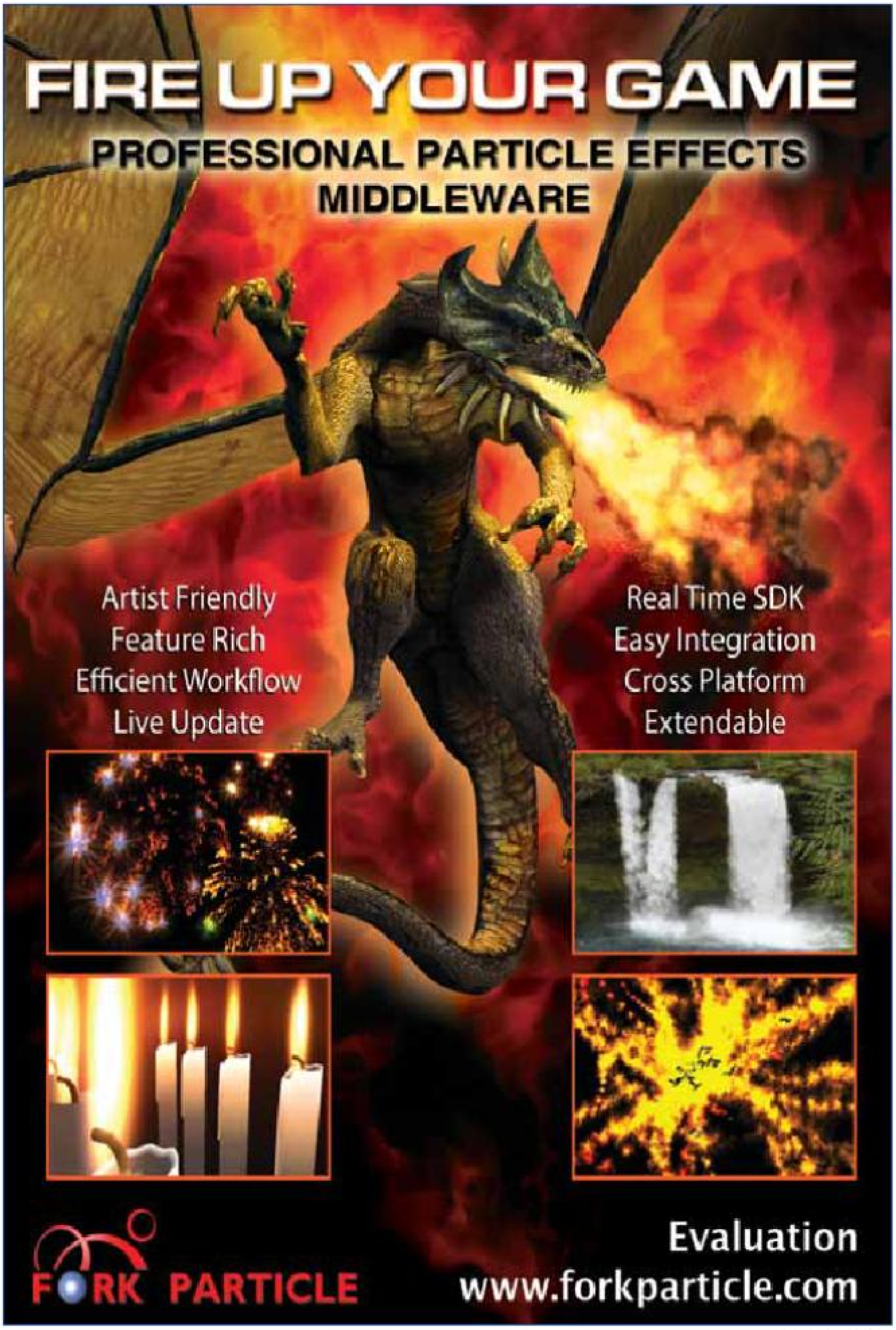

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Studio News

This month: Lightning Fish and Codemasters

LIGHTNING FISH EXPANDS

Banbury-based studio Ligtning Fish Games has recuited Rob Mann to lead the company's programming team for one of its key projects.

Mann holds 20 years previous experience of programming in the games industry, having worked at studios like Full Fat, Codemasters, Acclaim Studios and Pivotal Games.

"I joined Lightning Fish as it has enabled me to further develop my career," said Mann.

"They're a very innovative and forward-thinking company, where family life is encouraged."

Lightning Fish CEO Simon Prytherch added: "Rob is a great addition to our senior management team. Rob and I worked together nearly 15 years ago. It's good to be working with someone with such wide experience again."

www.lightningfishgames.com

Moving on up

Our monthly focus on a rising development star

Sion Lenton, Moving on up Q&A

Creative Director, Codemasters

Sion Lenton joined Codemasters in 2008, and was recently named creative director for the Operation Flashpoint franchise.

What do you hope to achieve in your new role for Codemasters?

Dragon Rising was Codemasters' first internally developed FPS and we're delighted with it. With over a million units sold our dream of bringing the franchise to consoles has been realised. I want to build on this. Like any IP there is no reason *Flashpoint* couldn't work across platforms and genres.

Where would you like to be five years from now?

I'd like to be at Codies playing on my Xbox720/PS4/PC looking back over five years of success for our games. Our approach is to build upon the features that really work and address those that don't. This obviously creates a lot of work but it gives us a great roadmap with which to move forward.

What excites you about the video games industry?

Even after almost 13 years I come to work with a grin on my face. I take a great pride in working for Codemasters, they are one of the big hitters and as a publisher/developer and the the last Brits doing both.

The *Flashpoint* team are among the hardest working, most talented individuals I've worked with and it's great that they all still get excited.

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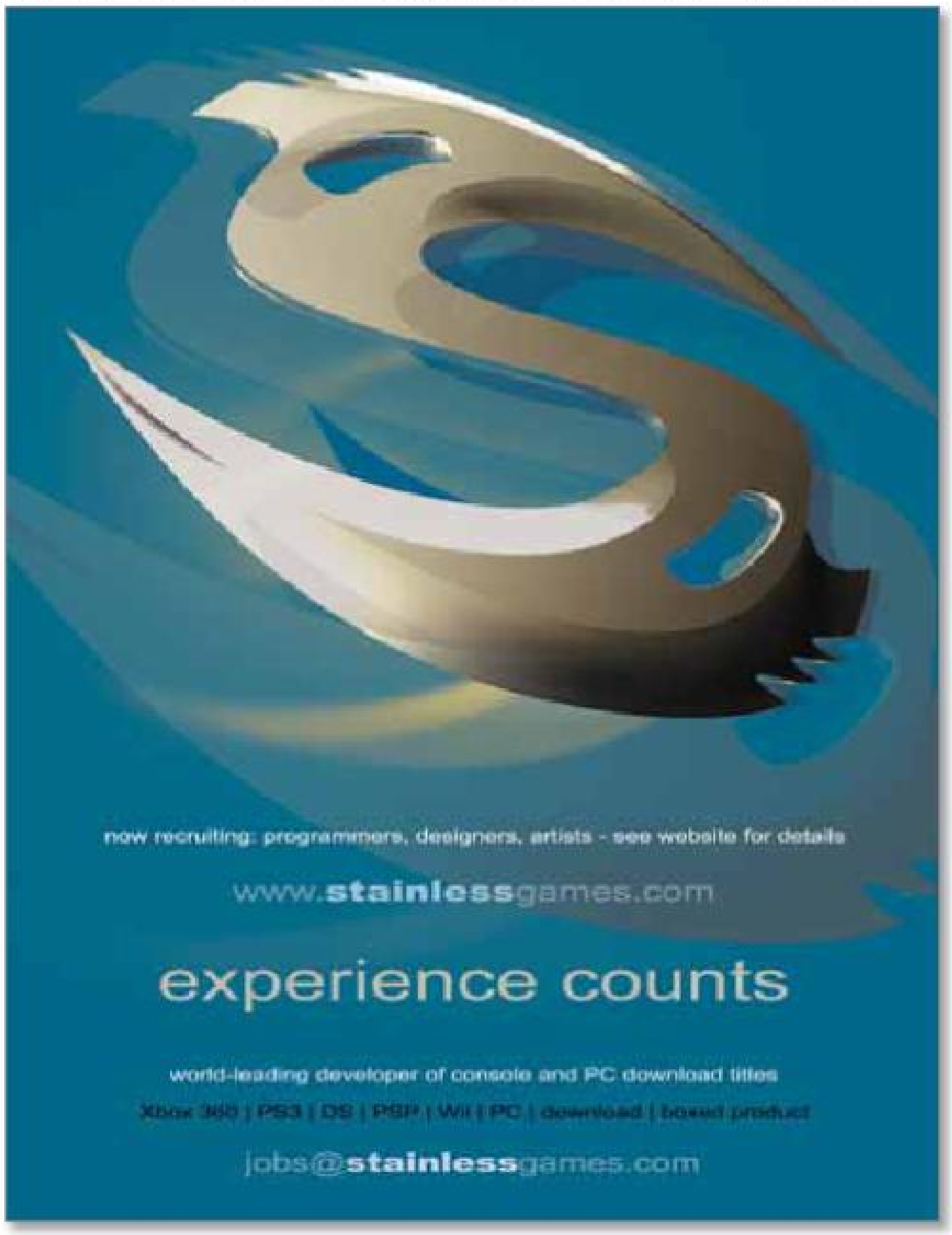
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Services Spotlight

AXIS ANIMATION

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Glasgow-based Axis Animation was founded in 2000 by four leading artists and animators to create world-class animations and short films for the video games and digital entertainment industries.

Over 40 people work at Axis' offices: a multi-faceted, international team whose individual career backgrounds include art, games, television, design, commercials and feature film.

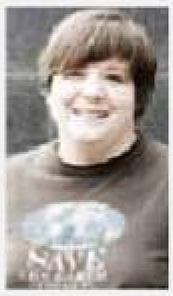
In 2009 Axis saw its reputation grow, especially across the Atlantic where client turnover increased by 30 per cent, leaving nearly 50 per cent of the firm's turnover now coming from the US.

The company seeks to maintain an open and approchable work ethic, as well as to foster close relationships with all of its many clients in order to build on its many industry successes to date.

Axis is comprised of a multi-talented and international team of producers, directors, designers, artists and animators. The studio creates stunning animation for some of the world's leading names in Commercials, Games, Broadcast and Film. Entertaining, crafted, compelling; Axis' work has won numerous industry accolades – most recently the prestigious Imagina Grand Jury Prize and a Best Animation BAFTA.

One of the UK's fastest growing animation studios, Axis fuses a personal approach and attention to detail with large-scale production values and infrastructure. The company has worked on promotional animations for such titles as *Mass Effect 2*, *Singularity*, *Brink*, *Killzone 2* and *Rogue Agent*.

Axis also includes Flaunt Productions, launched last year, a division dedicated to providing directing and design talent accross a range of animated styles including 2D, stop motion, motion graphics and CGI.



CONTACT:

Axis Productions Limited
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Tools News

This month: Terminal Reality, Stonetrip and Unity announcements

Terminal Reality has announced the integration of proven net technologies into its proprietary Infernal Engine.

RakNet, a C++ game networking engine, will be packaged with the Infernal Engine at no extra cost. The online play technology is said will bolster network performance in-game, giving developers a string of tools such as object replication, remote procedure calls, patching, secure connections, voice chat, and real-time SQL logging.

Terminal Reality – whose engine was used to build the most recent *Ghostbusters* game – is widely promoted as a scaleable platform for Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, PSP and Nintendo DS.

"We are proud to offer Infernal Engine developers the robust multiplayer power that RakNet provides right out-of-the-box," said Joe Kreiner, VP of sales and marketing at Terminal Reality.

Stonetrip has started a special promotional deal in an attempt to encourage more Mac game developers to use the latest version of its ShiVa 3D dev engine offering.

With ShiVa 3D not presently available on Mac, its creator is offering developers €300 off the normal cost of €1,499, to allow them to offset the price of virtual machine software and the Windows OS that is a requirement for Mac users looking to create games with the engine today.

"There are competitors that will be charging for the next upgrade of their product and this is the perfect time for developers to switch to a better development engine," said Philip Belhassen, CEO of Stonetrip. "We know that Macintosh users have some barriers to using ShiVa, and we want to remove the obstacles and make developing on ShiVa just as compelling for them as it is for developers using PCs."

The new price is set to remain in place until the launch of ShiVa 3D 1.9, which is expected to be made available later this summer.

Unity Technologies has that Unity-specific Noesis training materials are now accessible via a newly launched Design3 streaming service.

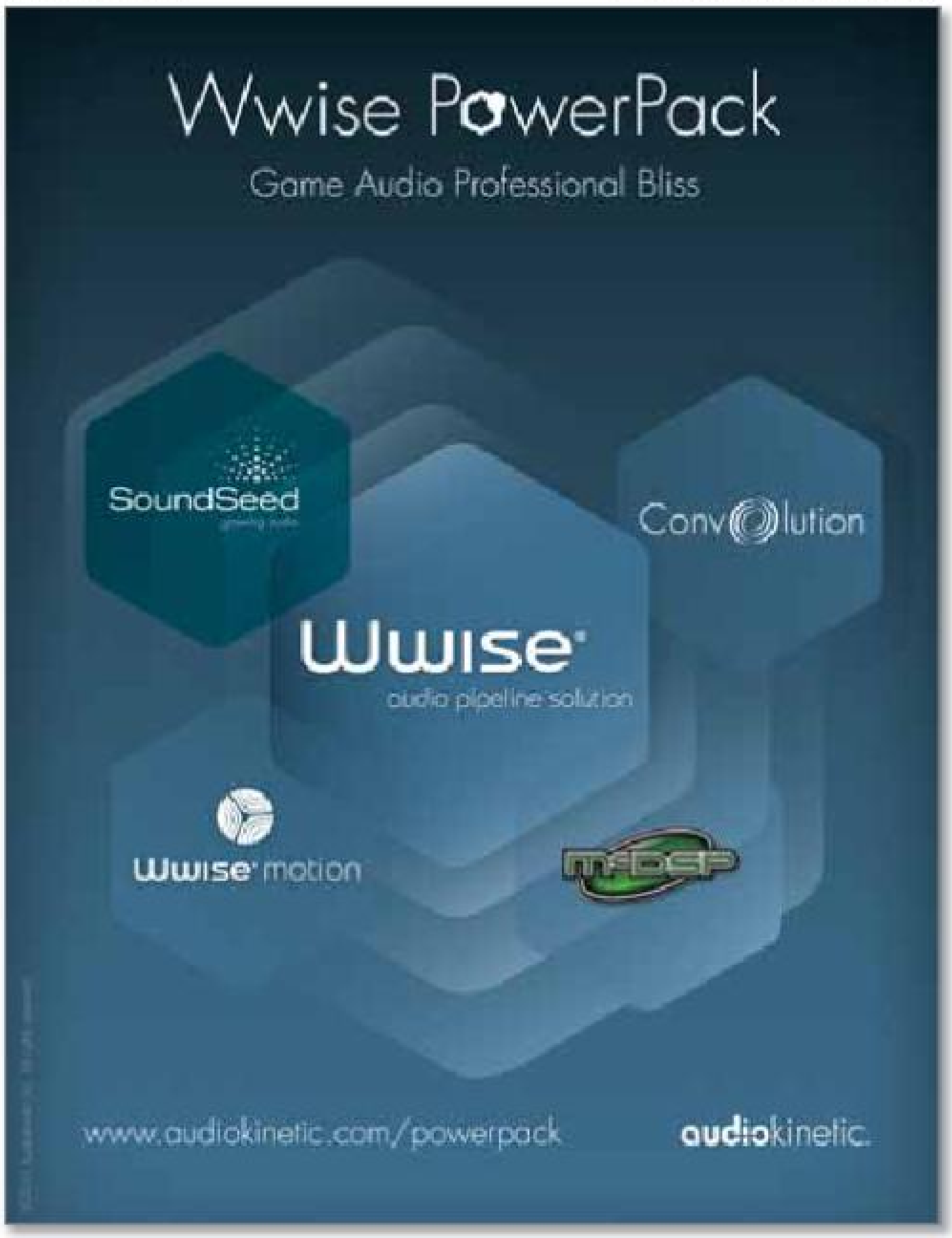
"The excitement over Unity in the academic world is growing quickly, and we're pleased that we have the opportunity to support Unity with our training materials," said Noesis Interactive CEO Casey Noland.

"Our goal is to enable all Unity customers to be making games ASAP and Design3's new 24/7 streaming service will be perfect to accommodate the schedule and budget of all Unity customers."

David Helgason, CEO of Unity Technologies, added: "When we launched Unity in 2005, our initial focus was the education market but we soon realised that we needed to be successful in the commercial market before we'd be accepted by the academic community."

"With our blowout success in the game industry and beyond it's now exciting to see that so many academic institutions are becoming part of the Unity family, and Noesis is doing great work to make this happen."

Audio Kinetic www.audiokinetic.com



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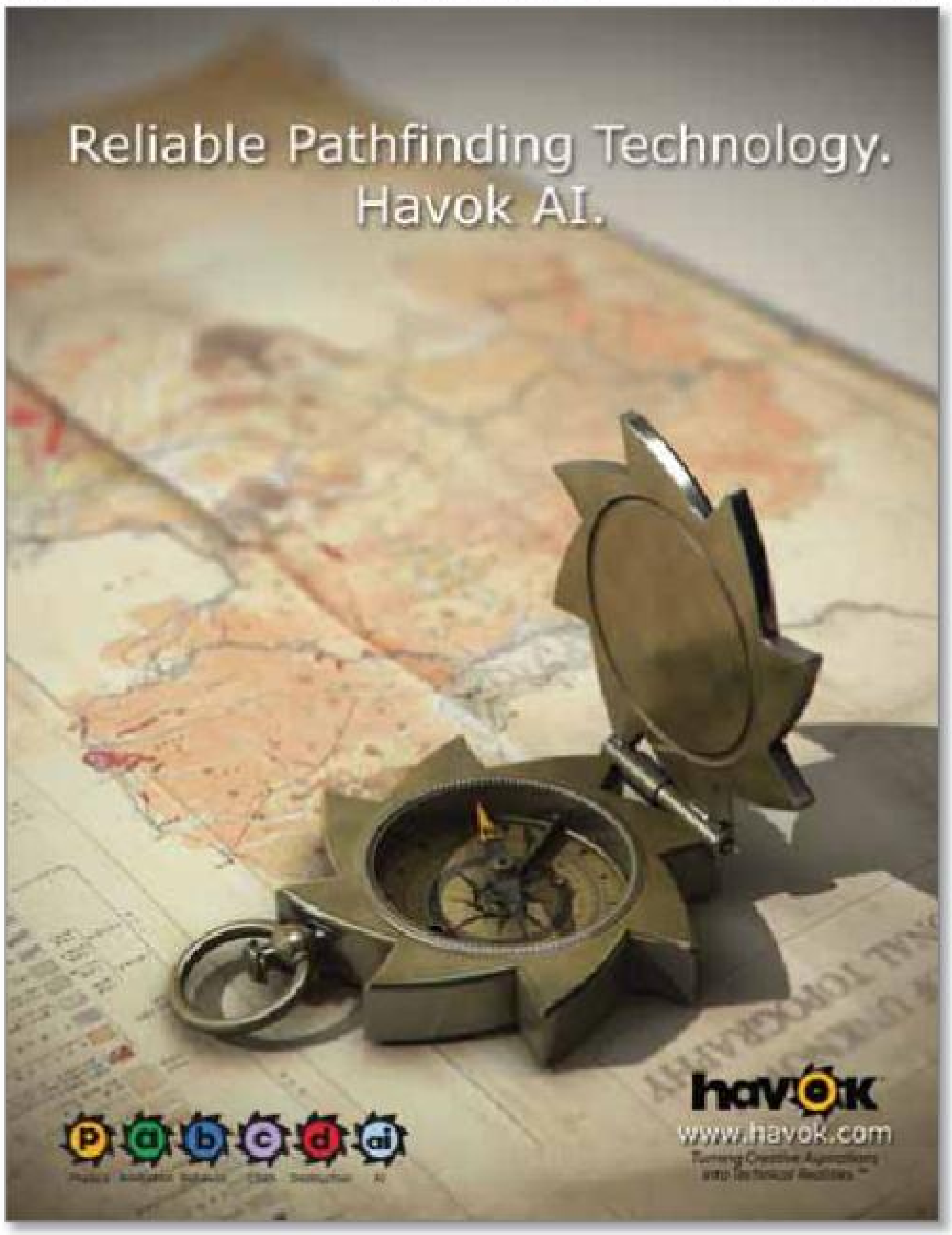

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Tool Spotlight

NATURALMOTION MORPHEME

TECHNOLOGY TYPE: MIDDLEWARE

Oxford-based NaturalMotion's Morpheme is the industry's first graphically-authorable animation engine for PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Wii and PC. It has been designed with the intention of giving animators an intense level of control over the final look of their animations in-game.

Morpheme consists of a run-time animation engine called morpheme:runtime and a unique 3D authoring application for animators called morpheme:connect.

Morpheme:runtime is a next-generation animation engine featuring advanced and fully customisable blend techniques, hierarchical animation state machine, IK support, physics support, and compression algorithms. It also has a lightweight run-time core.

On top of this, morpheme:runtime comes with fully customisable blend nodes, a full and hierarchical state machine, integrated euphoria support and full source code supplied.

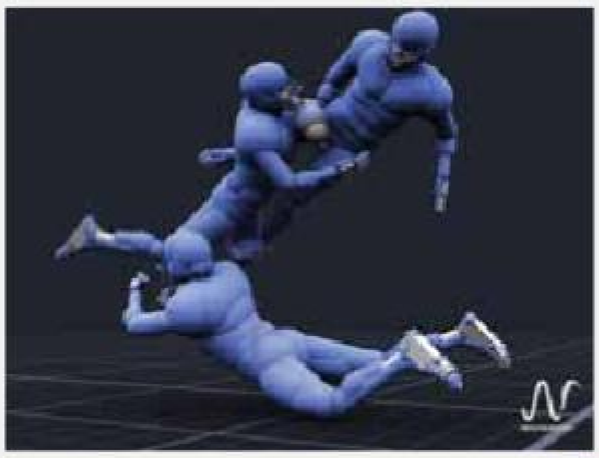
Morpheme:connect supports morpheme:runtime through a powerful and flexible 3D interface which provides animators with a graphical environment to author and test the game animations' transition logic and blends. In real-time, animators can modify animation parameters using graphical tools, change transition timings, and see the result instantly in the 3D viewport.

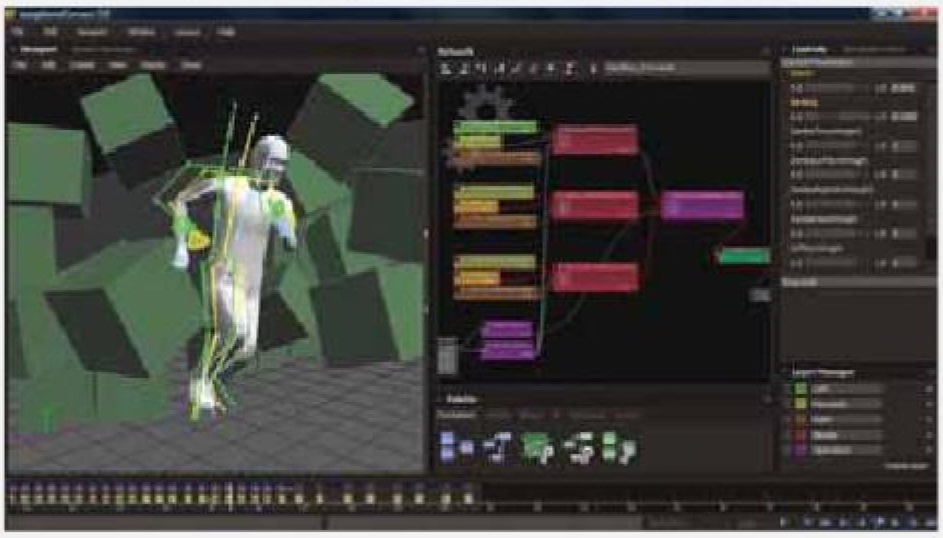
The application is also fully scriptable in modern code and uses 2D and 3D viewports for authoring and visualisation. Graphical authoring of transition graphs and blend trees is also packaged alongside real-time manipulation of transistion graphs and blend trees.

Connect is also fitted to include support for live game pad control, Lua script support and is fully extensible through plug-ins. The entire engine features euphoria support and is available for PlayStation 3, PSN, Xbox 360, XBLA, Wii, PC, iPad and iPhone.

Morpheme is currently licensed by an array of top-tier developers, including Bioware, Eidos, Ninja Theory, 38 Studios, Futuremark, Total Immersion Software, CCP and Gearbox Software.

"The goal of morpheme has always been to streamline the animation production pipeline, offering faster development times and higher fidelity," says NaturalMotion CEO Torsten Reil.





CONTACT:

NaturalMotion Ltd
Eagle House
Walton Well Road
Oxford. OX2 6ED
United Kingdom

E: contact@naturalmotion.com
W: www.naturalmotion.com

Services News

This month: New faces at Spov, RealtimeUK reshuffles

Spov, the London based design and visual effects agency, has hired design industry pro Dan Higgot to drive forward business development and strategy. Dan has many years experience working within the creative industries, and was hired for what was refferd to as his understanding of the care required when selling creative services.

"To be part of a business with such creative strength and an enviable reputation is hugely exciting on a personal level, and on a business level it is a dream as Spov are a company that people naturally want to talk to and get involved with," Higgot said.

www.spov.tv

CG animation studio **RealtimeUK** has hired 11 new staff members in an expansion move the firm hope will contribute to the success of several projects currently in-progress for large games studios.

The company says that the new employees are just one part of a 'strategic reshuffle' organised by MD Tony Prosser with the intention of improving the process of dealing with clients, from sales to project delivery.

"I'd like to welcome aboard all our new arrivals," Prosser said.

"With many years of experience behind them, I am confident that they will bring a lot to our growing team."

www.realtimeuk.com

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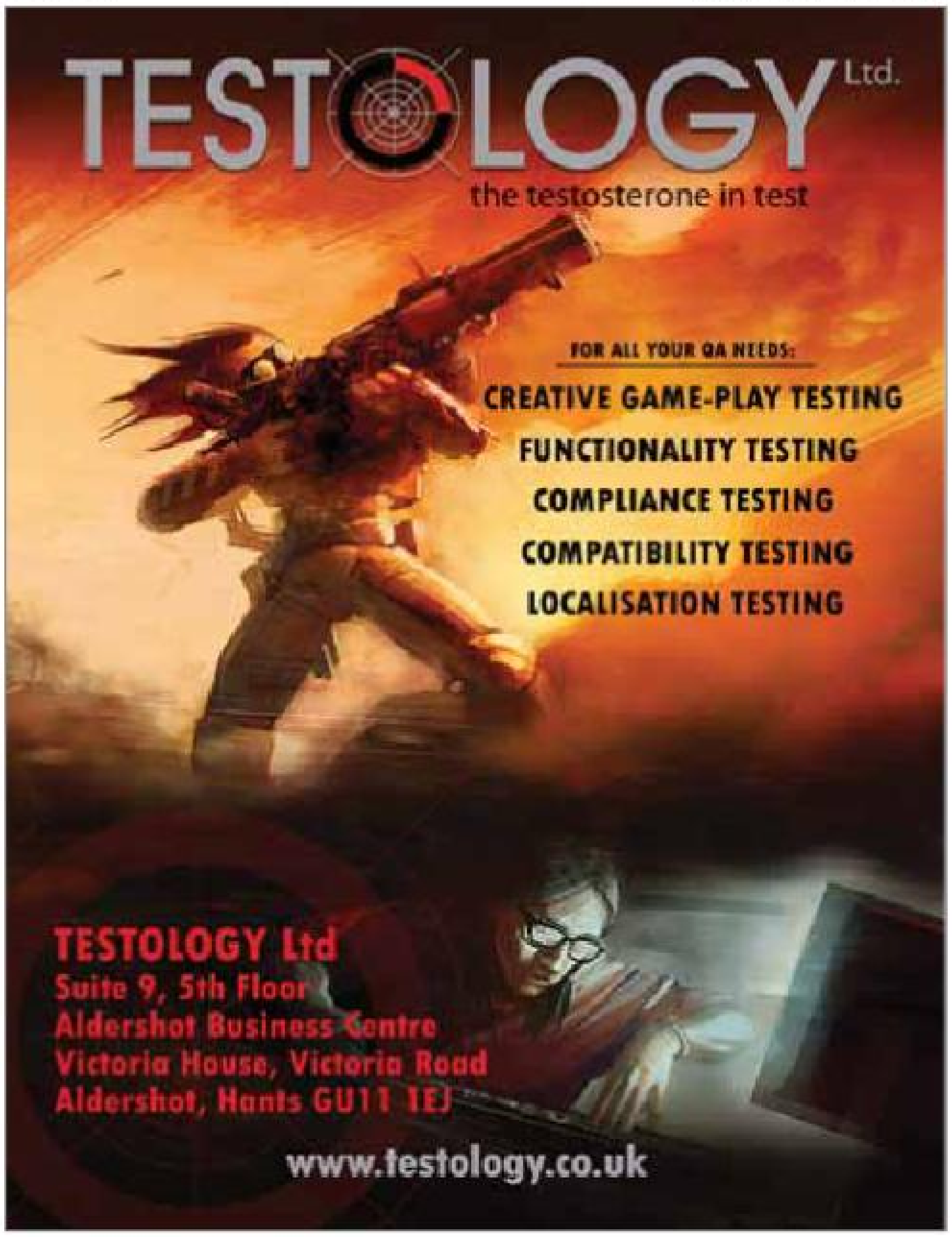
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Training News

Search for a Star concludes as Sony and NRDA offer new training scheme

Search for a Star
Aardvark Swift develop

The nationwide **Search for a Star 2009/10** competition – designed to highlight and reward the UK's most promising developers still in education – has reached its conclusion with the crowning of Queen's University Belfast student Pieter Botha as this year's winner.

Pieter beat 150 students to take the prize, passing three stages of competition; answering technical questions, creating a game and passing a panel interview hosted by industry professionals Hollie Heraghty of recuitment firm Aardvark Swift, Relentless lead programmer Lizzie Attwood and HR Sarah Maynard plus Aardvark Swift director Ian Goodall.

"Pieter is an exceptional student who demonstrated technical ability, an overwhelming passion for games and the dedication needed to succeed in this industry. He has also demonstrated the ability to work well both within a team and on his own," said Aardvark Swift's Hollie Heraghty.

"Pieter is proof that there are some brilliant students out there who tick all the box's and we hope this has given him the platform to begin a career that he has always dreamed of," she added.

Botha was also very pleased aboutb the result.

"It's like a dream come true. I feel like I've been given a proper chance at getting my dream job in the games industry," he said.

"I want to thank Aardvark Swift for running such a fantastic competition. I won't ever forget what they have done for me and will keep in contact with them throughout my career."

Botha will be receiving his Search For a Star Award at the Develop Conference 2010 in Brighton. All members from the panel interview will also be in attendace.

www.aswift.com

Northwest
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Sony Computer Entertainment Europe and the **Northwest Regional Development Agency** has joined forces to offer a £2 million budget for a regional staff training and development programme.

With its Sony Liverpool studio and Evolution Studios, SCEE boasts a significant stake in the north west development hub, and is set to gain from the investment, which it is hoped will help SCEE to remain innovative and pioneering in the region.

"SCEE operates in an increasingly competitive marketplace and must continuously invest in the latest training," stated Robert Hough, chairman of the NWDA.

"The pool of talent in the digital and creative sector in Liverpool and across the Northwest is outstanding so we must retain the major players in this sector and help them to remain competitive and become the best in the world, whilst remaining cost effective."

Michael Denny, senior vice president of SCE Worldwide Studios Europe, added: "We are delighted that the NWDA has recognised the significant contribution that our industry has made to the region. This is about investing in people, who are our most important and valuable asset. The investment will allow our Northwest based operations to continue to be innovative, pioneering and competitive on a global level"

The training programme is set to be delivered over a four year period, and will benefit current and future employees. The organisers hope the region's skills base will be improved further by closing the gap between industry and academia, and sharing best practice.

Some of the investment will also be channeled to allow for support of other regional initiatives, including MediaCityUK and the Media Enterprise Centre.

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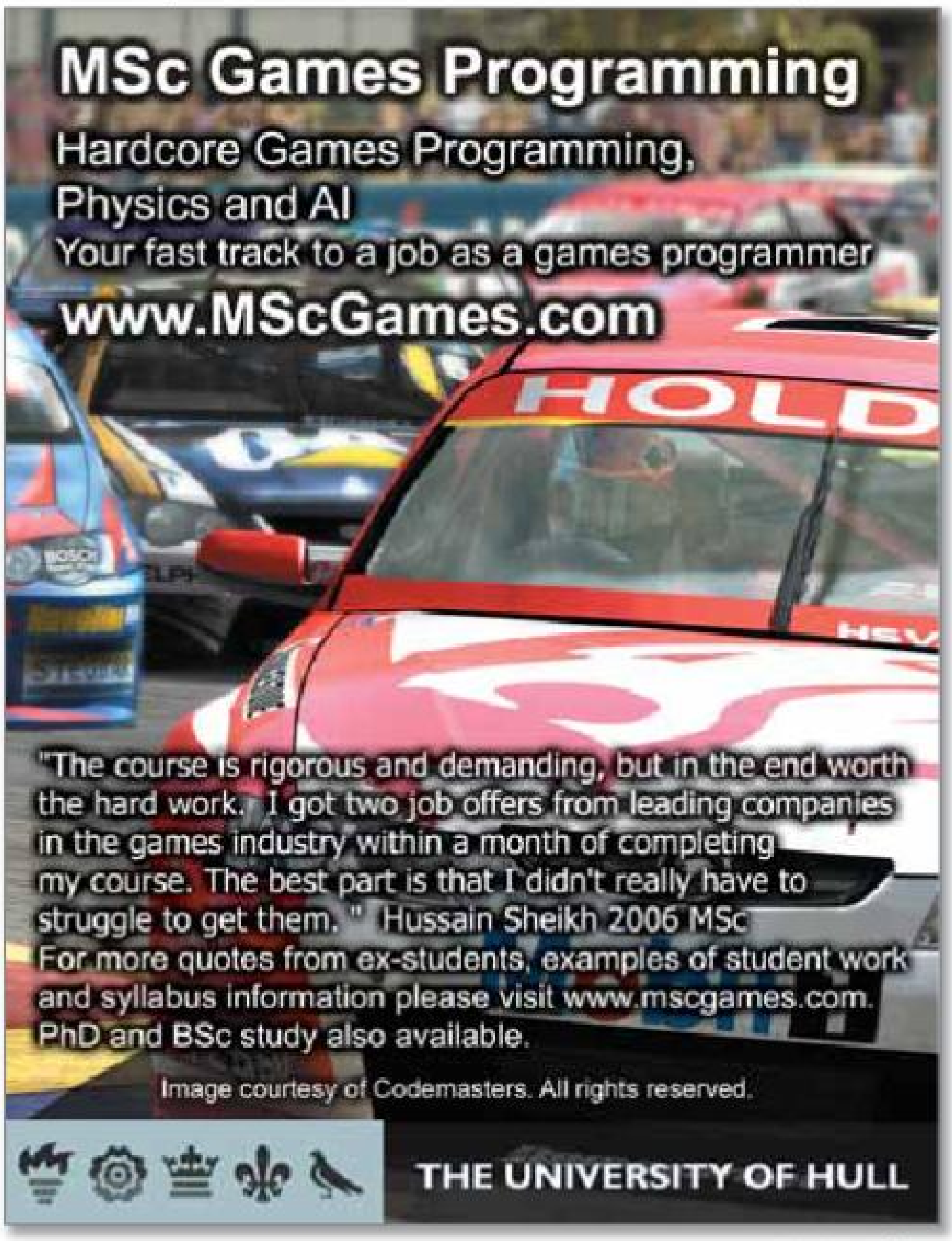

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For more quotes from ex-students, examples of student work and syllabus information please visit www.mscgames.com. PhD and BSc study also available.

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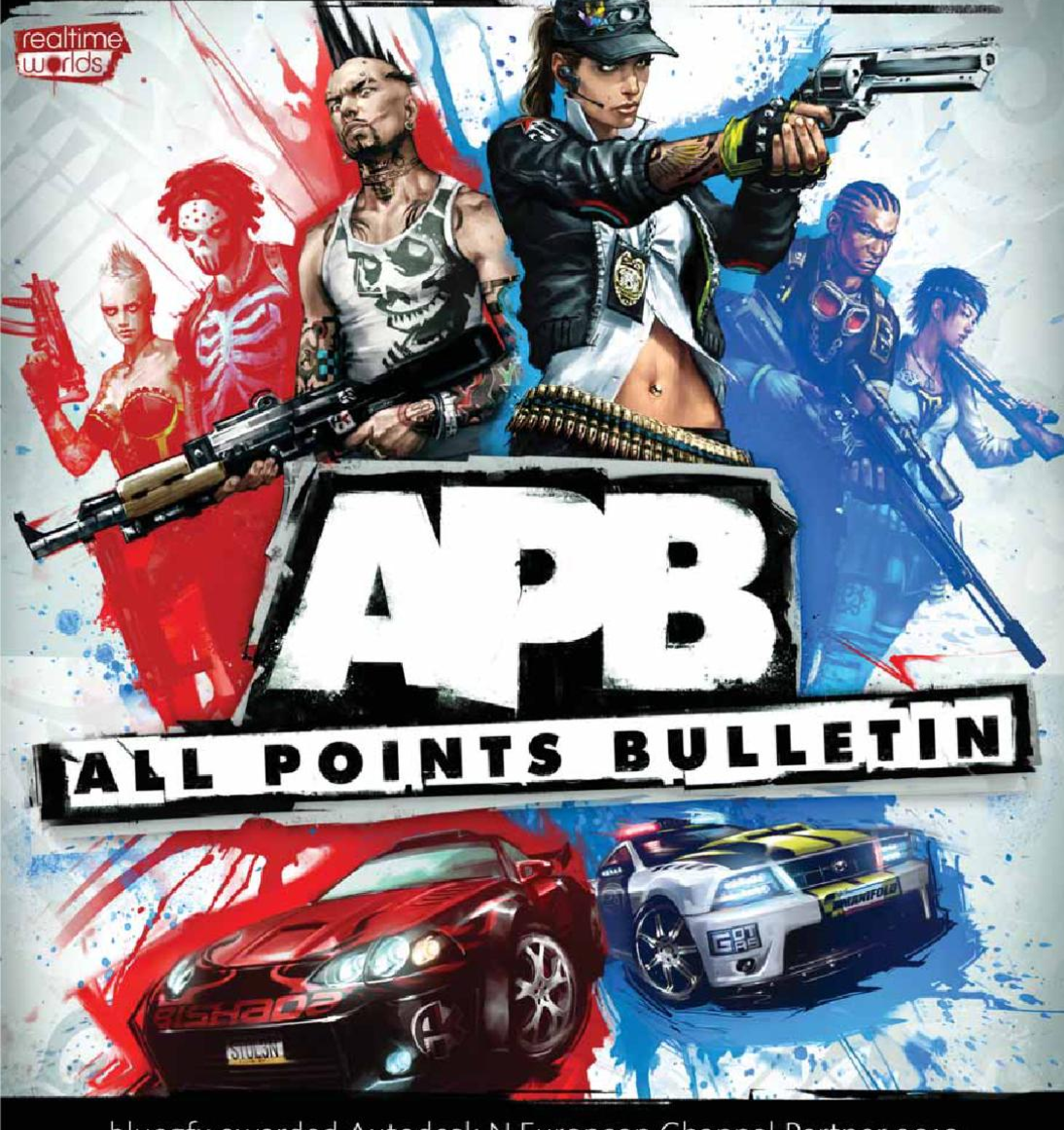

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